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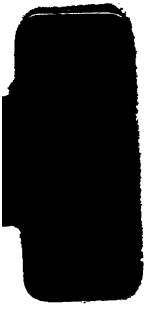

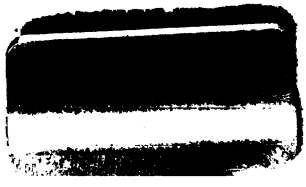

SYNDICALISM

AND PHILOSOPHICAL

REALISM

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

SYNDICALISM

AND PHILOSOPHICAL

REALISM

A STUDY IN THE CORRELATION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL TENDENCIES

BY

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TO MY TEACHER

SIR HENRY JONES

AND ALL THE OTHER GREAT TEACHERS
WHOM HE HAS TAUGHT ME
TO MAKE MINE

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THE reader must judge as to the justice of the leading position maintained throughout the following chapters. To the writer the case is perfectly clear. It seems to him that much current philosophy would, if true, essentially justify what is sometimes spoken of as the new philosophy of Labour. The primary intention of the book is simply to point out this fact; a fact which, if genuine, would seem to be of some importance for the deeper understanding of our times.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS SYNDICALISM?

SYNDICALISM is the voice of the failure of something. The failure has not been exposed by the "living" philosophy of our time. It has not been detected. It is of such a nature that, even if it were detected, a large body of recent thinking, so far from censuring it, would be bound to raise hands of benediction upon the failure itself and say "Well done!" Such, in the most general terms, is the state of affairs to which we would draw attention in these pages. The thesis.

To state it more particularly: we are interested in the relation between syndicalism, a recent form of social movement, and some movements, also comparatively recent, of philosophical thought. We find no clash between them; and, we maintain, there is no wonder. One does not feel a current when one is swimming in it. Our most recent philosophical thought, all unconsciously, is swimming in the same current with that general social movement which has been making itself felt during the last decade or two within the socialistic camp and is appropriating to itself the name of

syndicalism. So direct is the continuity that, as we hope to show, even domestic differences between various modes of recent philosophy itself disappear and an unexpected affinity springs up between them, if they are pressed simply to give their bearing on the syndicalist movement. They are but one part of a general tendency of which syndicalism is another.

I

The genesis of syndicalism.

There is no mystery about the fact that syndicalism has come into being. It is one of the natural developments of socialistic activity.

By the very nature of the social system, the lines of policy open to a socialistic movement are broadly two, the economic and the political. Of these the former is naturally the first to be pursued, being the more obvious, in its benefits. Economic socialism means raising wages. At least, it begins with that. And of all the means whereby an oppressed class may hope to make its way towards social betterment, this generally seems at first the most direct.

Once suggested, the method proceeds by a natural and almost necessary process to take the shape of trade-unionism. The raising of wages is a matter of bargaining. The worker's ability to bargain depends on what he has to

bargain with; that is, on the value of his labour. If he commands a certain wage, he is able to do so because of the labour which he can threaten to withhold if he does not get it; the effectiveness of the threat being measured by the difficulty of either replacing his labour or dispensing with it.

In this situation there is a possibility of development, which is too obvious not to occur to somebody at some time; a simple way of increasing the value of what a man can threaten to withhold, and so of increasing his bargaining-power. This is combination. With combination an aggrieved man can threaten, unless his grievance is redressed, to withdraw not only his own work, but that of all his mates as well. He can hang up a whole establishment. This is the first impulse to union. And it begins as an impulse towards the trade union; for the simple reason that the idea naturally occurs first to craftsmen. Craftsmen, if they leave, are harder to replace than other men. The master has to go farther afield to get them. Thus, what we may call the elementary union is a union between the men of one craft within a certain geographical area.

Equally simple is the elementary plan of action. If a workman in an establishment has struck against some imposition and his fellows consider him justified, they agree that no one will go and fill his place. If a whole establish-

ment have a common grievance, others in the locality will not go in and supply the establishment. If the entire locality have a grievance, all refuse to work and the effort is made to keep other localities from sending in men.

The development which has produced the trade union is capable of going farther, and under the conditions must go farther. Industry as a whole is expanding. With it there comes what has been called the annihilation of space. Means of communication, railways, telegraphs and the like become more rapid and efficient. Distant localities are made accessible. It becomes a matter of as little trouble to fetch men across three counties as it once had been to bring them from the next parish. This weakens the union. It makes the replacing of men on strike easy. If the men of a trade are to continue to stand together effectively, the change must be met by widening the locality which a union covers and initiating some sort of working understanding between the localities. The natural end of such a line of development would be the conclusion of an understanding between all the unions of men of the trade in the country.

There was at least one further way in which, in the nature of the case, the elementary union could seek to develop itself. Not content with extending its membership to a wider locality, it could have extended it also to other trades. In some ways the invitation to a policy of this

sort lay very close at hand. There exists a very close interdependence, sometimes, between men of various trades and callings, and the fact comes out specially clearly at certain points in the industrial system. Take, for example, the building trades. At least half a dozen different kinds of craftsmen and their labourers are habitual co-partners in the building of houses. Why then should not one union, in a place, hold all these men? Why should a section strike for their own advancement, dislocating the work of the others, without giving share of the benefits? Why not either all come out at once for benefits all round or else all stay in? The combined pressure of all would obviously be of greater effect and would not involve the unrewarded inconvenience of any.

The trade unions, however, were not framed for what we might call lateral expansion of this kind, and they have not been able to keep pace with popular feeling in the matter. The popular feeling for union (on various occasions since so long ago as 1889, but more frequently of recent years) has repeatedly risen to a strength much greater than trade-unionism has been able to take advantage of. The unions do not appear to have been able to develop their structure sufficiently rapidly to keep pace with the popular demand for united action. From this fact syndicalism has its genesis. Here lies its source.

The phenomenon of syndicalism was making itself clearly felt during the first decade of this century in all the leading industrial countries. In some aspects of it the movement was more conspicuous in France than, say, in Great Britain; but waves of unrest, spasmodic manifestations of a popular thirst for combined action, affected Great Britain too, as well as America; and the outbreak of war did not stop it. Repeatedly there existed, not on paper, but in actual fact, a unionism beyond the unions, a spirit in the working population for which the authorized activities of existing combinations of workers did not appear suited, and which resulted in the creation of "caves" within trade-union opinion itself, and in the introduction of such a turbulence into its life as has made its inner history during these years almost incapable of being recorded accurately.

II

Syndicalism in France.

Syndicalistic socialism cannot be said to have originated in France, but it came earliest into prominence there, and from there took its name. A very succinct account of its development is given by Mr. G. D. H. Cole in his *World of Labour*.* In France local trade unions—*syndicats*—were legalized in 1884; and

* G. Bell and Sons, London, 1915.

the attempt at a national federation of them was begun as early as 1886. The effort did not prosper; owing, it has been thought, to the reluctance of the French workmen to swallow too many socialistic ideas all at once. Of much happier augury were the "Chambers of Labour" which sprang up about the same time or a trifle later. Since each such Chamber or *Bourse* afforded a meeting-ground for various unions in the same locality, the system contained the nucleus of a possible development towards unity between different unions. These Chambers of Labour united themselves into a national federation (*Fédération des Bourses du Travail*) in 1893, and in the following year the two federations together formed themselves into the body with which syndicalism is associated to-day, the General Confederation of Labour, the *Confédération Général du Travail* or C.G.T., the central trade-unionist organization in France.

We have to notice the character of this body as revealed in the way in which it came to power. In the period between 1894 and 1902 a local French trade union or *syndicat* might connect itself with the larger world through affiliation with one or other or both of two superior organizations, which were more or less connected. By one of them it was linked up with all the other unions of its own kind in the country. Through the other (the local Chamber of Labour or *Bourse*) it was connected

with the other trades in its own place. Of the two methods of enlarging the syndicate's horizon, that which united it to the others in its own locality prospered while the other lost ground. Syndicalism in France, so far as that is identical with the effectiveness of the General Confederation of Labour, has grown out of the *Bourses* much more than out of the ambitious efforts at a large national union of each single trade. The organization which, so to speak, caught the breeze was the local inter-trade union.

III

Syndicalism in America.

In America the signs have been still clearer of the existence of a tendency amongst workers towards united action of a sort for which the official trade unions did not cater. Industrial conditions differ widely in America and in France. One of the chief differences arises from the varieties of race in America. Even racial barriers, however, have not prevented new manifestations of labour union there. The existence of the huge American trusts may perhaps, as has sometimes been suggested, have had some effect in fanning the war spirit into more ardent flame in that country. In any case, fighting combinations have been effected between people linked by practically nothing but the mere bond of space. As in France, these movements have produced on

the one hand new kinds of union; and on the other lines of cleavage within the old.

Previous to 1905, Mr. Cole tells us, trade-unionism in America had attained great numerical strength. It belonged in its main features to what we called above the elementary type. Each trade stood for itself. Its energies were given to the primitive policies of keeping the trade a close preserve, preventing the encroachments of allied craftsmen, limiting the number of apprentices, and insisting on entrance fees. Little thought was given to the idea of united action in a cause common to all the trades. Out of such mutually independent unions was formed—also in 1886—the American Federation of Labour, which now officially represents trade-unionism in America. As a body it still preserves its character. In fact, its critics, the sponsors of the newer unionism, seem to denounce it habitually as being individualistic and aristocratic in temper, and declare that it has on that account no message for the working class.

The character of the newer movement is indicated at once by the word "class." What has repeatedly happened in America is the surging up of the whole working class of a place, without distinction of calling or status, and occasionally without distinction even of race. The new tendency has taken some time to find a channel of expression. Its appearance in any strength is to be dated from about the

period 1900–1905, a period characterized by a great wave of industrial unrest; which, it is to be noted, coincided with a great accession of power to the established trade-union body, the conservative Federation of Labour. Mr. Cole tells us that the Federation much more than trebled its membership during these years. Nevertheless, much of the new spirit, as it were, flowed past the orthodox body. Several rival organizations arose, and the breeze was enough to fill all their sails. The one which has emerged most successfully is the body calling itself the Industrial Workers of the World. In its "Preamble" or declaration of policy it emphasizes the abandonment of the whole "political" line of socialistic activity and trusts to the economic line alone, to unionism, a unionism which is to embrace the whole working class and recommend to it the attitude towards capital of simple and unending warfare till the whole class shall be outfought and finally expropriated. "The working class and the employing class," says the opening paragraph of the declaration, "have nothing in common. . . . Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the industrial field and take and hold that which they produce by their labour through an economic organization of the working class, without affiliation to any political party."

The effect of the wider unionism upon the

older forms of organization in America has been quite as signal as its effect in giving birth to new forms. Indeed, the name syndicalism appears to stand, in America, much more for an educational propaganda carried on within the old and strong Federation of Labour than for any independent rival organization. As a result there has arisen within that body a strong section of opinion favourable to the wider "industrial" type of unionism. Previous to the war the new views had begun so decidedly to make their mark upon the Federation that it seemed as though this "get-together spirit" were clearly destined to prevail in its counsels and policy.

The affinity of principle between American syndicalism and the French *Bourses* needs no insisting on. Beneath all differences of racial conditions and differences of industrial organization there is in both the practical repudiation of the assumption that men, in order to unite, must belong to the same craft or trade or otherwise specialized occupation. A much looser bond will do, one approximating the French bond of simple space. There are differences between the two countries. It may be that a pure and simple space-bond is not enough in America. But space certainly counts. And of course the bond is not sheer space, even in France. The fact that men of a *Bourse* are men of a locality is part of the secret which keeps them united despite the variety of their

callings. But it is not the whole secret. More enters into it than that.

IV

Syndicalism in Great Britain.

The presence of industrial unrest in Britain is too recent an event, it was too widespread, and the memories of it are too vivid to require much elaborate description. The economic side of the general social movement had suffered the same change here as elsewhere; and between 1910 and 1912 Labour was visibly getting out of the control of its older leaders and was throwing up new ones. Between the strikes of that time and earlier ones there was a difference of quality. Workers who had struck before for definite objects, for wages or hours or workshop conditions, seemed to be coming out now seeking something vaguer and vaster, something, they knew not what, something, as far as could be judged from their spokesmen, suggestive of fundamental alteration of the whole conditions of labour, if not the abolition of the industrial system altogether. The occasion for a strike might be so slight—an isolated case of injustice towards a single employee or the like—and other reason for it so undiscernible, that the whole phenomenon could sometimes look like an unusual awakening of the moral consciousness on the part of vast masses of men. But the inner character of the

unrest was clearly the same as in other countries. It carried with it two things: the discovery how little of a hindrance to united action really lay in mere differences between one kind of worker and another; and the discovery how far the effectiveness of the policy of united action really was from being exhausted. The new spirit emerged most conspicuously, and has continued to find best expression in the teaching of the Syndicalist Education League. Here we find the whole view of the strike changed. It is no longer to be looked upon as a means of obtaining an adequate wage, and therefore as something to be laid aside periodically when that end is for the time being secured. It is to be regarded as a means of abolishing wages altogether, and therefore as something never to be laid aside while the industrial system lasts.

The general phenomenon of syndicalism.

The social phenomenon with which we are concerned is now before us. It is a spontaneous popular feeling for larger combination and bigger-scale striking, breaking through the limits of craft within which it had been too readily assumed trade-unionism must confine itself. Just as the elementary trade union itself was at first a spontaneous discovery, somebody's daring experiment which worked, so the possibility of wider union has been discovered, a union among the working class as such, without respect to what they work at. Already in 1889 the London dockers, united

under the leadership of Mr. John Burns, showed how little a plan involving common action need be hindered by mere differences of occupation. More than two decades later a strike of textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which was made the subject of an inquiry by the United States Government,* showed how possible it was for the most conglomerate mass of people, not merely unskilled and skilled, but workers of half a dozen nationalities whose various strike committees could not even speak one another's languages, to be swept together into a strike movement and carry it through successfully. It was an instance, almost, of pure mass action. The instinct for such action is a feature of the modern industrial world. All around us it is ready to be set in motion. And its appearance, in various shapes and with various degrees of organization behind it, is what is being called syndicalism.

* *A Report on the Strike of Textile Workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in* 1912 (Washington, Government Printing Office).

CHAPTER II

OF WHAT IS SYNDICALISM THE FAILURE?

Syndicalism being a bid for "economic" salvation,

WHAT we have been dealing with so far is mainly an economic fact. It consists in that new tendency towards unionism—a unionism beyond the unions—which has been making itself felt in modern industry practically wherever that industry has reached full maturity. Now, with its economic character is connected a disintegrating influence which spells a certain kind of failure. Such is the general thesis of the present chapter.

I

is a virtual confession that something else has failed.

There is nothing in the syndicalist movement suggestive of failure if you take it by itself. For its own immediate purposes, it is rather a success; and there may be some truth in the claim often made that it represents the only way the working class can have of replying to a situation which is being thrust upon them. To see the failure which it is we must begin farther back. We must endeavour to discern

its ethical and political aspect; and this by taking it in the wider context of the history of the socialistic movement as a whole.

This is in its history.

Glancing back over the long story of socialism, from its rise in France towards the end of the eighteenth century right down to its latest manifestations of activity, the movements and documents emanating from the various industrial countries at the present time, we can see that three main stages have punctuated its course. They are marked by three different attitudes to the State. At first socialism was comparatively indifferent to the State. Then there came a time when it was hostile; although the hostility was directed against the actual State, not against the very idea of there being such a thing. There has now come a time marked by hostility to the very idea. The third of these periods is the syndicalistic; and if we consider it in reference to the other two we shall find that it registers a certain failure. Something striven for before has been resigned here; something of value. Let us take the three stages in their order.

II

The period of knight-errantry in the history of socialism; when enthu-

The first period in the history of socialism, the period of what we have called comparative indifference to the State, is the one which most historians of the socialistic movement have

named the Utopian. Among the pioneers of socialism those who left the deepest mark were men occupied, in one form or another, with the idea of a spontaneous regeneration of society. The occasion for it was to be the launching of one or another social scheme which, once started, would spread of itself and spontaneously work its work. In this spirit appear, e.g., the activities of Fourier in France and of Robert Owen in Britain.

Socialists went out to found Utopias.

It was characteristic of those theorists to leave the State more or less out of their plans. Owen, indeed, dealt with the State. He had friends in the Government who were interested in his ideas; and he might have had them longer had he been just a little more discreet. The State, however, was at most a means of getting his ideas tried, not an integral part of his scheme. The vision of Fourier was of much the same quality. The basis of Fourier's plan of social redemption, those *phalanges* of which he dreamt, oases of human life as they were to be, self-contained colonies of families who should organize their industry and create and distribute their wealth with an efficiency and a justice never hitherto known, and who would be free even after that to cater for the lighter and the higher sides of human nature too—those *phalanges*, with their work and their recreation and their worship, their concert halls and temples, their gardens and theatres all complete, were to exhibit human

Owen.

Fourier.

life in its rounded perfection; and they were destined, in their author's view, to spread of themselves over the civilized world, convincing by their sheer loveliness. There was no fear of their rational and harmonious internal organization going wrong. Their members were free; and a free man—such was the centre of Fourier's philosophical gospel—would continue to do what is rational and harmonious.

Their belief in human nature;

The last phrase indicates what is perhaps the secret of the way in which these early enthusiasts conceived of their task. With varying degrees of sanguineness they believed in the natural goodness of man. Owen also had to have his philosophical proof of it, different as it was from Fourier's. He laid deep his foundations in a comprehensive deterministic philosophy designed to show that man was never to blame for anything he committed. A man could not help his actions any more than he could choose his parents. You had to touch his environment to touch him: and, on the other hand, if you touched his environment you did touch him. Man was not corrupt; he had only been corrupted. Lift the fetters which the senselessness of the prevailing system had laid upon every part of his nature and he would step forth a free, beautiful, noble, moral being. Not all the pioneers of socialism were thus Utopians. Few of them, indeed, carried quite so little ballast as Fourier. Still, it remains a perfectly just historical judgment

which has led so many writers to recognize a stage in the development of socialistic theory when Utopian schemes specially commended themselves. This part of our general reading of the facts will be pretty well agreed upon. There was a stage when the State was rather left out of account than either actively opposed or regarded with favour. It was a stage when the chief reliance was placed upon human goodwill and the power of the new regime to commend itself by its own intrinsic attractions.

and comparative indifference to the State.

III

The period of Utopian thought and experimentation which marked the rise of socialism eventually gave place to a very different conception of things. From being mainly sentimental and humanitarian, the socialistic movement learnt to be "political." The essence of the change is that socialism now begins to have designs upon the State—scientific designs. The new perspective is largely the work of one man, generally reckoned one of the greatest in the history of the movement, Karl Marx.

The period of reasoned optimism and of scientific construction in the history of socialism.

Marx was a Hegelian; one of the "Left," it is true, but still an offshoot from that prodigiously influential historical-philosophical school; and the fact is of great importance for our understanding of the bent of his thinking. At the time when he was coming into promi-

The vision of Karl Marx.

nence, in the late thirties and early forties of last century, the exceedingly bright day of the Hegelian philosophy was beginning to draw towards afternoon. Its powers were dispersing. Its great principles had begun to show appearance of falling old and platitudinous. Marx, however, by more or less inverting it all, could still make the Hegelian philosophy yield him a living and inspiring gospel. It is not difficult to see how. The master had said in his teaching about reality, that where you have the truly rational there you find the real. It is not difficult to understand why a strong man with world-revolutionary socialistic impulses in him should feel attracted by this teaching. On the face of it it is something to get hold of the real. It gives one sureness of ground. The real is what will ultimately tell. The real, we feel, may take a long time to come out, but like the truth it will out. Now Marx is interested in the social order. He has but to say, then, that here too the real is rational, and his case is clear. For, to him, the leading feature of the present state of civilized human society — namely, the supremacy of the bourgeoisie—does not, whatever it may do, bespeak the rational order of things. Society erected on the principle of capitalism is out of harmony with the very nature of reality.

And this is not merely logic to Marx. It is history. History to him, as to Hegel, is a

serious affair. It is no mere assemblage of idle anecdotes. It is more than a mere haphazard series of events. There is logic in it. It follows a law. And taking his own reading of the law, Marx becomes convinced that the prevailing social order is fast ripening for a change. A revolution affecting the whole of it is historically due. Conformably with this, the idea of the State became the central idea of his socialism. As he turned his attention to one part of the civilized world after another he seemed to see everywhere the same thing; he saw, not an arena in which to play, himself devising special world-saving schemes, but the spectacle rather of whole States already, by their own impulse, changing themselves in a socialistic direction, as though by a natural process. The duty of the socialist was defined thereby. The socialist's duty, in Marx's view, was not to devise or invent, but precisely to lay aside his own devices and try, instead, to link himself up with that predetermined world-movement which was making for socialism, and scientifically encourage it forward. "We will not," he says in one of his earliest published writings—the second of two articles from his pen which appeared in a periodical (in the one and only number of it) called the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, issued from Paris in 1843—"We will not oppose the world like doctrinarians with a new principle: here is truth, kneel down here! We expound new

principles to the world out of the principles of the world itself. We don't tell it, 'Give up your struggles . . . we will show you the true war-cry.' We only explain to it the real object for which it struggles, and consciousness is a thing it *must* acquire even if it objects to it." His aim was to make the world conscious of whither it was already moving, so that it might the more surely and easily get there. What he forgot to take account of, in this scheme, we shall see later. Syndicalism exists, with its economic interest and its class worship, because Marx forgot something.*

The sweep of Marx's political observation is very comprehensive, and his historical vision often wonderfully acute. He is interested in all the countries of civilized Europe, and the course of the development of the modern industrial nation seems to lie open to him as on a map. He sees the rise of machinery in manufacture, the displacement of hand-workers, the gathering of masses of unskilled in factories, the accumulating of wealth in progressively greater quantities in progressively fewer hands, the swelling of the multitudes of the dispossessed. Everywhere it appears that a change is toward. The same historical forces which in the Middle Ages made the serfs demand freedom from their feudal masters and win it, the same forces which turned these serfs eventually into the bourgeoisie who rule

* See below, chap. III, section i.

the world to-day, are still at work. They are plainly preparing a similar rise of the proletariat, the class who at present work for the capitalists and keep them rich. There is being prepared a rise of this class into such a position that they will be able to take possession of all the costly tools of modern industry and organize and work them for their own behoof. Naturally, he has little sympathy with his predecessors and their Utopian dreams. What he criticizes in them is their presumptuousness. Yet what he criticizes he also excuses. History, he says in effect, had not advanced far enough to give those people an adequate idea of the situation they were in. "The founders of those systems," he says, "see, indeed, the class antagonisms. . . . But the proletariat . . . presents to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent political movement." The "material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat are not ready" as yet. Those people, therefore, "search after a new social science and new social laws." "Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class-organization of the proletariat to an organization of society specially contrived by these inventors." *

* See *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, section iii, sub-section 3. Eng. trans., edited by Engels (London, Wm. Reeves).

Marx's larger vision gives him, by implication, a constructive as well as a revolutionary side.

To Marx, on the contrary, the actual social conditions of the world are everywhere of themselves inviting co-operation. Socialism consists in co-operating with them. Thus he is able, even in 1848, to point to France, to America, to Switzerland, England, Poland, or Germany, and put his finger with the greatest ease upon the movements in each with which true communists will sympathize. And it is not a little remarkable to find him prepared even to throw his weight into the scale on the side of the bourgeoisie in Germany, in their struggle with the monarchy and the remnants of feudalism.* It is suggestive as regards the vexed question as to the duty of his disciples. It goes to confirm the view of many of the later nineteenth-century socialists, that the significance of Marx lies in his perceiving that socialism is not a thing which has to be invented and, so to speak, superimposed upon the natural order of the world. It is a science. It is the science of using and directing those world-forces which are socialistic in their tendency. If this reading be right it is possible to regard as the true followers of Marx those who continue to make the bringing-in of the socialist State a science. The great majority of the advocates of the new industrial unionism are neo-Marxians. It is just possible that they are less true to the spirit of their master than they think. Sorel, e.g., is fond of urging socialists

* *Op. cit.*, concluding section.

to carry out the spirit of Marx's teaching and not "comment on his text." But on one side of him this is his spirit, the temper which believes that the tendency of the actual social forces of the world is already towards socialism, which resolves scientifically to guide them thitherwards, and which will not falter or fail in the resolution to make a science of the bringing-in of the regime which they suggest. But fuller consideration of these matters belongs to a treatment of what we have called the third stage of the socialistic movement.

IV

Period of the failure of the scientific-constructive ideal of socialism.

What we have called the third stage in the history of socialism is that in which there has sprung up a hostility to the very idea of the State, in contrast with the efforts towards scientific State-reconstruction which characterized the second period. We might have called it, in a special sense, the economic-revolutionary phase.

Constructive socialists and revolutionaries.

It has not been the rule for the advocates of constructive State socialism to call themselves followers of Marx or to defend Marx. Constructive themselves, they have not made it their business to seek out the constructive side of his teaching, emphasize it, insist that he too was a constructive thinker, and that they were his true followers. The commoner course has

been the simpler one, of saying that Marx was a revolutionary and that he was wrong. And for us, of course, the question which side of Marx is the fundamental one, and which type of socialist is his true follower, is altogether a side issue. The important matter is the clearness with which, since his time, two ways of carrying on his work have come to be distinguished, and the distinction of socialists into "reformist" and "revolutionary" which has arisen in consequence.

They have become associated with political socialism and economic socialism respectively.

The distinction of revolutionary and reformist has had important results. Syndicalism is pre-eminently revolutionary; and it, as we have seen, has been developed out of the economic side of the socialistic movement. Under the influence of this fact, perhaps unconsciously, we now tend to associate revolutionary socialism with the economic side, and reformist with the political side, of general socialistic activity. It has become natural to us to think of the revolutionary socialist as a striker, and of the social reformer as a Member of Parliament.

This is not without justification,

The idea that reform goes with political activity and revolution with economic is not without its justification in facts. In all the leading industrial countries except Germany (where the syndicalistic movement has been less pronounced) the new syndicalistic departures have professed to discard political methods of action and have unmistakably

advertised the fact. This has been the note struck pre-eminently by the C.G.T. in France and the Industrial Workers of the World in America, and hardly less by our own syndicalistic leaders. They are all out for "direct action," and, in their divers ways and degrees, all proclaim the bankruptcy of political socialism. There is no hope in the State. In America they have been heard to cry, "Don't vote"; in France, "Don't enlist." Just where socialistic energies have taken a more revolutionary turn, there we find the economic motive in the ascendant and apparently taking the place of the political.

not only in fact, but in right.

We come here upon the *locus* of that hostility to the very idea of the State which has appeared so clearly in the more recent phases of the socialistic movement. For there is an intrinsic distinction between economic and political good; and the rise of the revolutionary spirit is simply an incidental accompaniment of the process whereby people are learning to realize more intimately than formerly, what is involved in that economic salvation upon which even Marx himself did so much to teach them to set their hearts. It is no accident that the economic motive should seem to impel towards revolutionary procedure. The economic motive is beginning to work by itself; and this is its nature whenever it is working by itself. It is inherently more of a disintegrating affair than the other. And it

effects what we have called the failure of syndicalism.

The political salvation of a State *versus* the economic salvation of a class.

There is something in the desire of a class for purely economic salvation, which is essentially less comprehensive and, when insisted on, more disintegrating to society than would be its desire for political good.

When the bone of contention in any public dispute is a political object the disputants are contending, professedly at least, about what is best for the country; but when it is an economic prize that is in question, the question is simply who is to have it. However much of pretence may be in the political impulse as we usually see it, the ultimate object which it means to set before itself is still intrinsically universal. All the corruption of politics which we have witnessed of recent years has not altered this fact. Politics has not yet been deprived of its high professions. Its object is still to look after the country. Its business is still to heighten the privilege of belonging to the country. This puts the good which it seeks, amongst those which are essentially shareable. The privilege of belonging to our country is a good which we all have. No one can say, "It is mine and not yours." It is a privilege that can be wholly mine at the same time that it is wholly yours. In contrast with this stands economic good. Economic good is nearer to the good of the natural man. The good of the natural man must be his alone. It

loses its value to him otherwise. Hence it consists of such things as don't admit of sharing; such as the bank cheque, which may be mine *or* yours, but cannot wholly belong to us both.

Economic good is not essentially shareable, and the exclusive quest of it is disintegrating for that reason. It cannot be shared until it is divided. It partakes of the nature of the dollar, which if it happens to be in my pocket cannot, for that very reason, also be in yours. Political good, on the other hand, stands nearer to those spiritual things which "spread undivided and operate unspent"; to that faith or joy or love or knowledge which do not leave me because I share them, but, on the contrary, grow richer in me. The value—namely, our common citizenship, which the political motive seeks to enhance or to keep from being lowered—is not a value for the class of politicians only. It is a value for every class.

In these circumstances it requires no special insight to see how the economic motive should be more of a disintegrating force than the other. It is abundantly clear that scrambling for the unshareable is an occupation to set men against each other in a degree in which the creating of the shareable is not. Our association of revolution and disintegration with the economic motive is thus not only in accord with the events around us. It is entirely in accord

with the inner nature of the motives themselves.

The wider political good has ceased to seem practicable; and so economic good is made the end. Herein consists the "failure."

And herein lies the failure which we said syndicalism was. The placing of the chief end of man in economics and in the salvation of a class is of the nature of a relapse. It is the outcome of a certain weariness. It is the failure of the long effort to achieve the good for man as such—the good, not of one class, but of all classes, i.e. the good of the State *qua* containing all classes. Syndicalism is the symptom of this failure, the sequel to it. It is a falling back of the disappointed spirit for solace upon something more disintegrating but easier than it had hitherto essayed. It is the resolution to secure at whatever cost the benefit of a class, and shut the eyes to what lies beyond. We said that syndicalism had resigned something of value. What it has resigned is faith in the possibility of creating a shareable good of the whole community. What it has substituted therefor is the conviction that nothing more is possible than that one class should seize its portion of a good which is unshareable.

To sum up: socialism thought it saw civilization itself moving rapidly and surely towards the socialistic goal. It tried to rope in the forces in the world which were operating that way. Syndicalism is its discovery either that it cannot really find these forces; or that, having found them in abundance, it cannot

rope them in. It can only smash through in the hope of saving something. It is the failure of construction and science and statesmanship as a socialistic means. It is the failure of the socialistic idea to prove its fitness for political power. It is the very voice of socialism at the confessional, confessing its inability to do what it set out to do—namely, run a State.

CHAPTER III

THE CONDITIONS WHICH HAVE CALLED FOR SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism does disintegrate.

IT will be part of our future task to see in what further fields, beyond that of social movements altogether, the same impulse to seize the immediate (which is an impulse towards disintegration) as is visible in syndicalism, is also to be descried. At present we must try to make quite clear that disintegrating forces are really at work in syndicalism, and that the revolutionary impulse is a central feature of the movement. It will help us if we ask whence the tendency has come. What conditions have made socialism take this syndicalistic shape? We shall find that they are precisely the conditions which Marx the revolutionist did not foresee. They are the margin of error in his estimate of the future of "capitalist" society.

I

The kernel of the situation: events

Syndicalism has at first sight all the appearance of being a return to Marx; and such it

genuinely is if Marx was nothing but a revolutionary, a question into which we do not enter. It has felt above all things the need for a revival of the class war. Marx's whole scheme of things presupposed this idea. To him the capitalist form of society contained, as its essential features, a middle class and a proletariat placed in conflict with one another. He held that the middle class was doomed eventually to disappear. By a natural law it automatically prepared the means of its own undoing. The system which it imposed upon the proletariat, and beneath which the latter were "bowed," was one in which the disagreeable features, the "poverty, oppression, slavery, degradation, and exploitation," mechanically and necessarily increased. By an equal necessity an ever-increasing organized resistance was being built up against that system, until the day when the whole of the capitalist social structure should break up.* But events have not fallen out quite as Marx in his revolutonary mood anticipated. It has begun to appear as though, in his prognostications, he had not reckoned with all the conditions. And syndicalism is one of the forces which go to restore faith in the scheme at a moment when faith in it had fallen in need of being restored.

have not followed the course which many anticipated; and syndicalism will bring them back into it.

Marx bases his calculations upon the assumption that the class war will retain its character.

How events came to de-

* *Capital*, vol. I, p. 842 (English translation).

part from Marx's programme.

What he does not seem to have seen is that, by his very discovery of it, he has started it to alter its character. He has awakened the classes concerned to the fact of its existence. Incidentally he has touched the consciences of some of the privileged class, and they not the least influential; and he has helped to create in them a desire to cease to incur the reproach of being an "exploiting" class any longer, but to work as conscientiously as they can for the establishment of an order of society which will not only fill their purses, but also, and as the pre-condition of that, satisfy their moral consciousness. Almost against his will, by his very preaching of the class war, Marx has helped to mitigate the war spirit. The whole situation constitutes an illuminating example of the difficulty of making a "natural science of man." The difficulty of reducing the facts of man's social behaviour to natural law, as we might the behaviour of animals, is simply that the natural law which governs men has a trick of ceasing to be a law whenever it is proclaimed. In the present instance, whenever the two classes learn what the "law" of their action is supposed to be, they see it to be discreditable, begin to remember their humanity, and refuse to have it.

Syndicalism, in restoring them, is betrayed into taking what are clearly

By some means or other, then, the situation has to be restored. The ground has to be reprepared for the coming of the socialist kingdom. The class struggle has to be made a

reality. Syndicalism comes forward to fulfil these conditions. socially disintegrating measures.

But in the very act it strikes up a suspicious and yet an apparently natural and almost necessary connexion with violence; and so becomes a disintegrating force.

This is the secret of M. Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*. The writer is obviously stung by the sense that the situation which inspired the revolutionary side of Marx is slipping away. In both the opposing social camps there appears to be growing up a desire for peace. In violence lies the one hope of restoring the state of things out of which alone, if Marx is right, the new social order can come. Sorel and the gospel of social war.

"According to Marx," says Sorel, "capitalism, by reason of the innate laws of its own nature, is hurrying along a path which will lead the world of to-day to the doors of the world of to-morrow. This movement comprises a long period of capitalistic construction, and it ends by a rapid destruction which is the work of the proletariat." During the period of construction when capitalism is developing fast, when wealth is flowing together in greater and greater quantities into fewer and fewer hands, the organization of productive industry is going on apace and becoming ever more perfect. The problem of the organization of industry is to be solved by capitalism before it dies; and the "sole function" of socialists, meanwhile, is that of "explaining to the

proletariat the greatness of the revolutionary part they are to play." Workmen "must be brought to perfect their organizations." Their unions must be developed into institutions which have "no parallel in the history of the middle class." The proletariat must be educated in ideas "which owe nothing to middle-class thought," ideas which "depend solely on their position as producers in large industries." Underneath the whole scheme runs the presupposition that the old attitude between the two antagonistic parties can be kept up. Without that, it all falls to the ground. "The doctrine will evidently be inapplicable if the middle class and the proletariat do not oppose each other implacably, with all the forces at their disposal; the more ardently capitalist the middle class is, and the more the proletariat is full of a warlike spirit . . . the more certain will be the success of the proletarian movement." Sorel, accordingly, sees nothing but danger in the "decadence of the middle classes." When broad-minded employers begin to "recognize" workmen's unions, when they begin to meet representatives of the men in a conciliatory spirit, when educated people of the middle class begin to study "social reform," when philosophical ideas of social peace and harmony spread through the industrial community generally, then we have the beginning of the end of all hope. At all costs, the middle classes must maintain their "vigour." They

must maintain their unqualified opposition to the rising proletariat. Otherwise we have nothing before us but social decay.*

"Violence."

"It is here," says Sorel, "that the rôle of violence in history appears to us as singularly great, for it can in an indirect manner so operate on the middle class as to awaken them to a sense of their own class sentiment." He draws attention to those socialists who have deprecated violence as being harmful to the socialist cause. "Attention has often been drawn to the danger of certain acts of violence which compromised *admirable social works*, disgusted such employers as were disposed to arrange for the happiness of their workmen, and developed egoism where the most noble sentiments formerly reigned." But he has only scorn for these. "To repay with *black ingratitude* the *benevolence* of those who would protect the worker, to meet with insults the speeches of those who advocate human fraternity, and to reply by blows to the advocates of those who would propagate social peace—all this is assuredly not in conformity with the rules of the fashionable socialism . . . but it is a very practical way of indicating to the middle class that they must mind their own business and nothing but that." † Clearly, to believe in the integrity of the State has here become the great apostasy.

* *Reflections on Violence*, chap. II.
† *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89 (English translation).

Sorel's lessons from Bergson. The "myth" of the general strike.

It is part of the same thesis when Sorel teaches the doctrine of a "general strike" as the grand climax towards which the workmen are to be led, as the goal of all their endeavours. The peculiar feature about this teaching, the feature which has struck all the critics, is that the workmen, in Sorel's view, are not to be told in any detail what the general strike is or what it is to introduce. Falling back upon Bergson, he insists that the workers' apprehension of that state of things which is the end of all their movements is to be *integral*. Their grasp of it is not to be rational, but intuitive; because intellect disintegrates while intuition keeps whole. In Sorel's language, the general strike is to be a "myth" to them. The myth is an idea with power to fill men with ardour, as did, e.g., the expectation of the second coming of Christ the early Christians. Any attempt to rationalize it, or "discuss how far it may be taken literally as future history," is beside the whole purpose. And with this conception Sorel will give the *coup de grâce* to those who would dispute with him about the general strike. To estimate the worth or significance of the idea of the general strike, "all the methods of discussion which are current among politicians, sociologists, or people who pretend to political science must be abandoned." "All that it is necessary to know is whether the general strike contains everything which the socialist doctrine expects of the

revolutionary proletariat." And "to solve this question we are no longer compelled to argue learnedly about the future; we are not obliged to indulge in lofty reflections about philosophy, history, or economics." The whole matter is to be got at more directly. "We are not on the plane of theories, we remain on the level of observable facts. We have to question men who take a very active part in the real revolutionary movement amidst the proletariat, men who do not aspire to climb into the middle class, and whose mind is not dominated by corporative prejudices. These men may be deceived about an infinite number of political, economical, or moral questions; but their testimony is decisive, sovereign, and irrefutable when it is a question of knowing what are the ideas which most powerfully move them and their comrades, which most appeal to them as being identical with their socialistic conceptions, and thanks to which their reason, their hopes, and their way of looking at particular facts seem to make but one indivisible unity.

"Thanks to these men, we know that the general strike is indeed what I have said; the *myth* in which socialism is wholly comprised, i.e. a body of images capable of invoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialism against modern society. Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving

sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in a co-ordinated picture, and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts, it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness—and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously." *

It is plain that, to Sorel at least, Bergson's road to truth is a royal road; and easier than the common road of scientific thought.

These passages are explicitly connected, by the author, with the teachings of Bergson, and we shall see later with what entire justice. We shall see at the same time how little claim to integrity this "integral" vision really has. All that we would recommend to the reader's notice just now is the simplicity of it, and the boasted facility with which it can be got at. The question was, how shall we obtain a real acquaintance with what socialism means when it is truly seen, i.e. when it is seen by the syndicalist? How shall we come by the real syndicalistic view of life? "Easily," is the answer here given. "Do but consort with the people who conduct the strikes, go in and out amongst them, hit upon the idea which, by rendering their experience a unity, sets them all aflame and keeps them flaming. You can then say: 'To enter into this is to enter into the syndicalistic mind; to act as this prompts

* *Reflections on Violence*, pp. 186–187.

is to act in furtherance of the syndicalistic cause.'" Such an apprehension is said to be what Bergson speaks of as global knowledge. It is identified with that "integral" apprehension which Bergson has exalted, under the title of intuition, to the position of the master insight of man. It is implied, apparently, that we, the sympathetic observers of syndicalism, can achieve this intuitive view of our ideal life without theorizing; all sociology, history, morals, politics being irrelevant to it. We need but "remain on the level of observable facts." We can get it all by simply observing what most stirs those whose part in the real revolutionary movement is "very active." It will interest us later to recollect this fact, the fact that Bergson's followers should thus find it so natural to take the "intuition" which he has set above thought, and which he has laboured so much to prove more difficult than thought, as something really much easier. We shall find that the disciple here is right; that Bergson himself at one time was betrayed into using similar language; and that thereby hangs a very important point, no less than that realism whereby recent philosophy is inwardly and genuinely related to those recent social movements to which it has, as a matter of fact, become externally linked.*

Syndicalism, then, has arisen to put right, in the name of Marx, a set of conditions with which

* See chapter VIII.

Marx did not reckon. Our thesis is that, *ipso facto*, it has arisen to disintegrate. It practises violence; and not merely accidentally. It is theoretically committed to it. But besides this, it is in a peculiar sense a disintegration of what Marx himself, if he at all "made socialism scientific," had begun to construct.

II

It is important to remember that a show of system may often cover a policy of disintegration.

It is abundantly clear that to allow socialist leaders no other function than preparing the workmen for revolution is at least to give up all idea of making a science of the actual bringing-in of the socialist State. On this showing there is no science of the revolution itself. The actual revolution is precisely what the leaders of the movement are not to exercise their thought upon, or work at, or in any way plan out; they are simply to go on holding it up before the men's minds as an "integral" intuition. Apparently there is to be no need for science when it comes. It is just to take place. The workers are to rise, mount into the saddle, take up the reins of a highly organized industry, and suddenly begin to run it themselves. Obviously, too, as M. Jaurès has pointed out, this means that no amelioration of workmen's present conditions is any part of the socialistic programme. But if so, it is hard to understand the great part it

has played in socialistic agitation; or, for that matter, how Marx himself could come to welcome the Ten Hours Bill in the English Parliament as a triumph of socialist principle.

Here, however, the matter stands as Sorel leaves it. Workmen are to go on continually striking and thereby preparing themselves for a great general strike of which they have no intelligent grasp, but only an intuition. If there is any science or system in the matter it must be, not a science of bringing the socialistic State in, but an artificial self-contradictory science of keeping it out; of keeping all positive advances towards its realization from taking place. We would call attention to this characteristic of socialism when it has taken syndicalistic shape, this coquetting with the idea of an organization against socialism's own constructive end, the idea of an organization against organization itself, which is equivalent to a repudiation of organization altogether. The point of principle is that such a thing as this is possible. There is an organization which is only systematic disorganizing. There is a perverse and artificial construction which is only destruction. In our study of realistic philosophy we shall be meeting the same sort of activity, the same type of mental work, in however different a field. Our main point at present is that Sorel's positive is of this inversely-negative sort. Despite his advocacy of

organization, his insistence on discipline, his talk of training people in "habits of freedom," and the like, he remains the advocate of blind striking; and as such his real weight is disintegrating and negative.

III

We run no risks in associating syndicalism with Sorel.

When we attach so much importance as we have done to Sorel's repudiation of constructive thought, the suggestion may occur that perhaps we run risk of identifying syndicalism too closely with the peculiar turn of one man's special ideas. Is it not the case that he is at best a somewhat solitary and detached leader; and that the movement really lies far apart from him, at least so far as the speculative part of his mind is concerned?

He does not essentially misrepresent the movement.

We do not think that there is any real force in this suggestion, although it has often enough been made. His anti-constructiveness, his praise of action, his aversion to "ideology," his recourse to the "myth" and the like are simply the rendering clear and precise a general attitude of mind which links him to many others; even, curiously enough, to some of his own detractors within the newer social movements.

He stands where others stand. He is only more

For he has his domestic detractors, milder and less mild. Though it is safe to say that few books on any subject are more ex-

quisitely "documented" than *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel is none the less apt to be found uninformed or irrelevant or uninteresting by men who, while less subtly imaginative than he, are in closer everyday contact with the actual movements of which both he and they are writing. Mr. G. D. H. Cole, for instance, who has laid a very large audience under a very real debt by the freshness of his writings on the whole subject of Labour, appears to sympathize with those who think that Sorel is a mere theorist, that he is out of touch, that the men who give the movements their character would not subscribe to his formulation of their creed, and as for his precious general strike, that when they are in the heat of action, it may very often not be in all their thoughts.

clearly conscious of where he is.

But as a matter of fact there is a point of view from which not only is there no difference —or none that matters—between Sorel and Mr. Cole; but there is none between Mr. Cole himself and other leaders even more in the swim of the movements than he; or, for that matter, between the latter and the actual rank and file of the men who come under the syndicalist's spell and go on strike. Sorel appears to us accurately to gather them all within his encompassing circle, and accurately to offer them up, along with himself, to Bergson, as the faithful practisers of what he has preached.

One and the same attitude to life is exhibited at all levels of the movement.

It is one and the same attitude, from the striker up to Bergson.

When Sorel asks what those men actually do who "take a very active part in the real revolutionary movement amongst the proletariat," his answer is substantially that what they are moved to do and what they do is to strike and strike and strike again, towards an end whereof it is his very theory that they do not have any articulate idea. It is a "myth" to them. He does not say that they call it a myth. That would be the very contradiction of his thesis. What is substantial in his view comes to this: that beyond the actual striking nothing further is really thought out. Now it seems to us that Mr. Cole himself has encouraged this idea. Is not the view that striking is the main business of workmen's unions an assumption which he countenances? Not only does he countenance this assumption. It appears to us that he lives in it. It governs his whole thought to such a degree that he has almost ceased to be conscious of it. The main office which the workman's union has to discharge towards the workman is to keep his class sense alive—in other words, to keep him from ceasing to quarrel with his "master." So completely are Mr. Cole's very criteria of success or failure framed within this assumption, so completely do he and those with whom he consults agree to conduct their high argument within it, that to those who are outside of it the entire discourse between him and them can at times seem unintelligible and as

if belonging to some alien order of mentality. "How is trade-unionism in your country?" he seems to ask of his French or Norwegian *confrère*; and the other replies mournfully, "Ah, not well; passing bursts of anger only; no great inspiring struggles"; whereupon Mr. Cole sympathizes, suggests possible reasons, and piously hopes that we may learn to do "better" in England. It is all very strange and perverted and foreign; but it is all precisely what Sorel has said. His idea encircles their entire universe of discourse. The scheme is simply this: First, you strike. If you are a men's leader you have little idea further, except to keep up the "inspiring struggle." If you are a striker you have no idea further. If you are M. Sorel himself, you see that what you are making for is the "general strike," but you also see that you don't really *see* it; it not being a thought of yours, but only a "myth." And when you are Bergson you understand all this, you understand what this peculiarly "integral" mode of apprehension can be, which is not thought, but above thought. It is the same attitude all the way down the scale, from Bergson to the workman. Encircling them all is the assumption that you leave ultimate ends to something else than your thought, that it is a good healthy thing to let thought stop at the striking, to let that be the end so far as thought is concerned, and simply to go on maximizing that; i.e. striking

harder, striking oftener, and striking on a bigger scale.

And it is an attitude whose effect is to disintegrate and unstring the soul rather than to strengthen or to stabilize it.

Now as regards the effect of this resolution to cease effectively thinking of any end beyond the striking itself, whatever it may be for the people higher up, it would seem at least, if we descend to the base of the pyramid, that it spells disintegration to the striker, the actual man who " downs tools " and goes to swell the crowd who follow the syndicalist agitator as he walks along the quayside or past the works gate. It is hard to resist the impression regarding him that disintegration is getting from his environment into his soul somehow; and at a faster rate than it was getting into his father's soul from a strike movement of the last generation. It is perhaps needless to labour this point; since, if we are right about Bergson, the whole phenomenon is simply the Bergsonian " intuition " acting as the unconscious underlying principle of the man's vision, and taking its natural effect. Yet we may indicate one or two ways in which the general impression of disintegration as a matter of fact forces itself upon us.

To the striker of an earlier day the strike was a fight for an agreement, a matter of securing a certain arrangement, which should be settled for a length of time; and a breach of the arrangement by the striker after it was made had to have some excuse found for it before it was perpetrated. Now, the striker is to be

taught that the excuse is not necessary. There is to be frankly no conscience about the breaking of agreements. And it is in the nature of the case that he should be taught this, since the aim is simply to strike when the opportunity comes. It was a sort of betrayal of the spirit of the new unionism even to enter into an agreement. And there is nothing surprising, although there is something abundantly naïve, in the anxiety of certain sections of the French C.G.T. deliberately to claim the right to break any agreement entered into, at any time they choose.

Neither is there to be any recognition of duty, on the new lines, when a trades dispute is in question. When Mr. Ramsay Macdonald tells an audience that his first care, when called upon to consider a proposed strike, is to discover which side is "in the right," they say at once that he proclaims himself no syndicalist. If the strikers have the power they can never be in the wrong. Nor do they expect the employing classes to do "right." No syndicalist, as Sorel eagerly asserts, ever bases his claims on the idea of duty. The capitalists' "duty" never extends farther (according to their own code) than yielding everything that they economically "can." Now, apart from the fact that every successful strike proves to the syndicalist that they "can" something more, the very point is that they must be pushed beyond what they "can," and must be

got as far as possible along the road towards expropriation. As to the inevitableness of this process, we are not at present concerned with that. Our point is the effect of it upon the mental economy of the individual. Our contention is that to remove so large a slice of conscience from its seat in this way is disintegrating.

The strain upon the inner economy of the soul would not be so severe if in place of what has hitherto passed as morality, syndicalism could provide a strong and systematic a-morality. It no doubt aims at this; but it appears to fail under the weight of the artificiality of the enterprise. The actual manifestations of the movement do not bespeak strength of integrated life—even integrated along a-moral lines—but on every hand suggest the opposite: substitution of the immediate for the remote, short views for long, loss of power over life as a whole. To take a trifling illustration: the syndicalistic advocates have frequently made a point of discarding even the modest degree of concrete organization which has grown up with elementary trade-unionism. It was characteristic of many unions of the older type, especially in Britain, to offer their members certain means for the better ordering of their life and firmer stabilization of it. Besides the strike pay system which enabled their members to survive a dispute, they had a system of pay for periods of unemployment,

a fund for sick benefit, and many other ways of catering for various aspects of the workman's welfare and arming him at various points against chance and accident. Such constructive activities are much less characteristic of the syndicalistic union. It has nothing to do with the offices of a "friendly society." It is simply and solely a fighting organization. The C.G.T. in France does not even distribute strike pay. These things are against a vigorous policy of constant striking. They keep life too stable. Even the strike itself tends to become a more immediate affair than the strike of the older type of union. "The day of long strikes is past." In other words, the newer organizations do not rally their members to a strong, close brotherhood prepared to stand a long siege in a just cause. They gather the most diverse interests of mutually unknown persons into a common multitude for a short time, for a cause into which the question of justice avowedly does not enter. A widespread violent effort for an immediate gain when the moment has come, and this repeated as often as the moment comes, is much nearer their ideal than sliding scales and long agreements, or any manner of "peaceful" or constructive devices. And here we return to the main thesis of these two chapters. What is driving men into the newer forms of unionism and of united strike action appears to be a certain impatience with the constructive political impulse and all its

works, an inability to be interested in objects so wide or distant as politics necessarily have to do with, or be content with the slowness of any political movement towards their ends. The tendency is to obey the more direct and elementary economic impulse rather than the political. In its main outline syndicalism is simply the failure of social construction. It is socialism's lack of faith in its own power to achieve its greater constructive aims. It is, as we have said, its confession—perhaps momentary only, perhaps not—of its inability after all to conduct the social revolution scientifically.

CHAPTER IV

REALISM IN PHILOSOPHY

Transition to problems of philosophy.

We must now pass from the consideration of social movements and endeavour to carry our thought across into the adjacent and closely related field of philosophical speculation. We must endeavour to sift out the essence of a certain tendency in recent philosophy. We wish to explain a connexion, at first sight rather mysterious, but really quite capable of explanation, which appears to exist between the social movements we have been considering and certain changes in the field of philosophical thought.

Our general thesis: that the realism in recent thought links it to the social movements we have been considering.

It is not of itself remarkable that people in the more advanced social movements should try to connect their views with the latest philosophy. What is remarkable is that both of two antagonistic philosophies should have been made use of in this way. Such seems to be the fact. It has been the fate of both of the two perhaps most antagonistic philosophies of the moment to be made to provide support for syndicalist ideas—namely, the evolutionism headed by Bergson and the realism founded on Mr. Bertrand Russell.

There is a reason for this. It is not that the people who think to draw inspiration from both sources are fools. It is that the two philosophies, unknown to themselves, have something in common; that what is common to them is their realism; and that realism is, of all ways of thinking, the most fitted to read success into that failure which we say syndicalism is. Our task in the present chapter is to determine what the nature of realism is, with a view to substantiating this thesis later. We shall find that our view of its nature depends almost wholly on the kind of idealism we oppose to it.

I

Looking to the history of thought to find what realism is,

Realism, it hardly needs to be said, is a term which has been used in the most various senses in philosophy. So much has it been bandied about that it is in danger of entirely losing distinctive meaning. In fact it is one of the terms which there has been an occasional disposition to banish entirely from the philosophical vocabulary. We do not think that such drastic action is quite called for. Behind the indefiniteness of meaning involved in people's use of the term there would appear to be a certain confusion of mind; and it seems a pity to banish a good word if, by clearing our minds, we can recover its primordial mean-

ing and find it still full of virtue. Let us approach the matter by putting the question first historically: What is realism as a characteristic of philosophical thought? *

we are not much forwarded by the attempt to identify it with anti-Berkeleianism.

If one sets out to look for specimen thinkers whose thought shall deserve to be called realistic one naturally turns to English philosophy as a promising field. We shall find that less success attends this enterprise than might, perhaps, have been anticipated. The reason is that Berkeley dominates that field. He is accepted there as the sovereign idealist. In seeking for realism in this quarter, we naturally cast about to find a doctrine the opposite to his, and following this false track we do not seem to be led anywhere. For we do not seem to be able to get anything more realistic than his own very doctrine. Hume is a realist, or something quite as bad. And Hume, apparently, is nothing but Berkeley made consistent. We shall require to look into this whole situation with some care. It is necessary to see that Berkeleianism is not idealism, and to see why, if we are to come by any helpful conception of realism.

II

Berkeley's position, that

Berkeley, as is well known, is out against the materialists; and he has a short way with

* On the question whether the historical meaning of the word and the ordinary usage at all coincide, see below, chapter VIII, section i; compare also section iv.

esse is percipi. The logic behind it.

them. They would resolve all the world into motions of matter. That is impossible, for him, for the sufficiently conclusive reason that there is none. No such thing exists as the matter which the materialist postulates. Let us glance at the logic on which this position rests.

There is a fact which is apt to appear to the unsophisticated reader of Berkeley as exceedingly strange, but which Berkeley declares to be so obvious when once thought about, that the only wonder is that people had not thought about it sooner. "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz. that all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth—in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world—have not any substance without a mind; that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently, so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or in that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit; it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit." *

* *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I, section vi.

Here we seem to have indeed put an end to materialism; but also, at first sight, to have effected an exceedingly violent inversion of all our ordinary ideas of the natural economy of things. Yet the logic of the situation when we begin to follow it out seems to leave us no alternative. Things do seem to collapse into ideas. Let us follow for a little Huxley's admirable exposition of the point in his *Helps to the Study of Berkeley*.*

Some things clearly exist only in the mind, e.g. pain.

A little reflection soon seems to make it clear that at least some of the qualities which we perceive in things only exist in the mind. If a needle pricks my finger, the sharpness is a quality of the needle; it inheres in the point. Nobody would say that the pain is there. The pain is in me and plainly could not be anywhere else. We have no difficulty in allowing that Berkeley's words are true of it. "Its being is to be perceived or known, and so long as it is not actually perceived by me or does not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, it must either have no existence at all or subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit." But some qualities which we imagine to exist outside are really in the same place as this pain.

And where else do "secondary qualities of objects"

Let the point of the pin, continues Huxley, be gently rested on the skin. I become aware of a feeling or condition of consciousness quite

* *Collected Essays*, vol. VI (Macmillan and Co., 1894).

exist, e.g. their smell or colour?

different from the pain, the sensation of what I call touch. Nevertheless this touch is plainly just as much in myself as the pain was. I cannot conceive this "touch" as existing apart from myself or a being capable of similar feelings to mine. And the same applies to all the other simple sensations. A moment's reflection is sufficient to convince one that the smell, and the taste, and the yellowness, of which we become aware when an orange is smelt, tasted, and seen, are as completely states of our consciousness as is the pain which arises if the orange happens to be too sour. Nor is it less clear that every sound is a state of the consciousness of him who hears it. If the universe contained only blind and deaf beings, it is impossible for us to imagine but that darkness and silence should reign everywhere. It is undoubtedly true, then, says Huxley, of all the simple sensations that, as Berkeley says, their *esse* is *percipi*—their being is to be "perceived or known." But that which perceives or knows is termed mind or spirit; and therefore the knowledge which the senses give us is, after all, a knowledge of spiritual phenomena. Thus all smells, tastes, colours, sounds, and the like, which usually we imagine to exist outside, are really in the mind, our own mind or some other.*

And what other existence can

In all this, however, Berkeley is not yet going beyond Locke. Locke had already con-

* Huxley, l.c., pp. 252–258.

cluded that when our senses come into contact with an object, the secondary qualities which we perceive in the object are really only effects set up by it in our senses. They are nothing in the objects themselves. "Flame is denominated hot and light; snow, white and cold; and manna, white and sweet, from the ideas they produce in us," which qualities are commonly thought to be the same in these bodies that those ideas are in us, the one the perfect resemblance of the other as they are in a mirror; and it would by most men be judged very extravagant if one should say otherwise. And yet he that will consider that the same fire that at one distance produces in us the sensation of warmth, does at a nearer approach produce in us the far different sensation of pain, ought to bethink himself what reason he has to say that his idea of warmth which was produced in him by the fire, is actually in the fire; and his idea of pain which the same fire produced in him in the same way, is not in the fire. Why are whiteness and coldness in snow, and pain not, when it produces the one and the other idea in us; and can do neither but by the bulk, figure, and motion of its solid parts? *

even their "primary" qualities have?

The last phrase indicates, however, what Locke still believed did exist outside—namely, the configurations and motions of particles which enabled the objects to take their various

* Locke, *Essay on the Human Understanding*, II, viii, 14–15.

effects on our senses. These were their real qualities; in Locke's language, their "primary" qualities.

But Berkeley goes beyond Locke in that he no more sees how figure, motion, rest, solidity, or the like can characterize any material object, or anything but a mind, than he sees how colour, smell, or taste can; for those are ideas just as plainly as these are. If I am to know anything of those mathematical properties I must conceive them; and I cannot conceive them except as ideas; the number of a group of objects is as much an idea as their colour; their actual solid substance, even, is never known to me except as an affection of my mind. Hence the apparently drastic conclusion: "all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth . . . have not any substance without a mind."

III

Does Berkeley's new principle make any difference?

We have seen the logic of Berkeley. Without asking as yet whether it is sound, let us ask whether it makes a difference; or at any rate whether it makes the enormous difference which it seems to make. For at first sight Berkeley's system seems, if true, to work a far greater revolution in our thought than that of Copernicus or Galileo ever did. We shall find that until you press it, Berkeley's thought

really makes no great change. What happens when you do press it, we shall see in its own place.*

The reducing of qualities to ideas is, in its origin, a process of making them all distinct and separable.

It is easy for the historian to trace the genesis of the teaching that all things without exception are ideas in the mind. The real beginning of it is Locke's discovery that the various characteristics of the same object need not all be in the same place—that is to say, they are separable. Locke does not doubt that the solid substance of the orange in my hand is really out there in my hand; but he teaches us to clear our thoughts regarding its colour, etc., which are merely effects which the thing has the power of taking, a power it owes to the physical configuration of its particles. The latter characteristics alone are what it really possesses. The only being which the others have, lies in their being perceived. Locke can thus leave the physical substance outside in space, while placing all the "secondary" qualities in the mind. The essential point is that they are thus separable.

To Berkeley the same assumption is vital. What means it, then, he proceeds, to be material, physical, or "out there in space"? Suppose I judge that something I see is out there five miles away; what means that "outness"? Two things, at any rate, reasons Berkeley, are entirely disconnected: what is out there, and what I see. I do not *see* the

* See next section, p. 65.

distance ahead of me. I only get it by the feeling of walking into it. Something totally distinct from distance, something which has no necessary connexion with it, *indicates* it to me. I can see in the sky a small luminous disk of about thirty points in diameter, and that indicates to me something entirely different at a great distance—namely, the body which the astronomer calls the moon. I see a small blurred man, and that indicates to me something entirely different—namely, a full-sized man a mile away. What is out there in space is not what I see. It is not anything like it. And here comes in the crucial suggestion. What I see is neither near nor far. What I see is an idea in my mind. Having brought matters to this pass, the further suggestion which was bound to arise does arise. If the things I see are only a set of visual ideas, what is the thing out there once I come up with it, except another set of tactual ones; and what is the space between except a still further set of feelings of moving about? There is nothing outwith the mind. And of any such inert, external substance as the materialist speaks of, there is no trace. All objects are ideas.*

And Berkeley, having done this, will make sure of their *order*.

If we ask, now, what keeps these "ideas" always coming in an order so unfailing that we imagine them to be things independent of

* The general view here referred to is first developed by Berkeley in his *New Theory of Vision*.

the mind, and read them off as this magnificent unvarying order which we call nature, the question pleases Berkeley immensely. The only being which we can conceive of as keeping ideas in order is a mind. The "ideas" which constitute the universe are therefore kept in their order by an all-encompassing mind. Let objects cease to be the manifestations of an impossible and inconceivable external "matter" and they become at once the manifestations of a Deity. Things are ideas; and the work of the Deity in keeping them in their order is what we ought to be alluding to when we speak in the language of science, of their following natural law.

But we have here no such revolution in our thought as at first appears. In fact, so long as we take it simply as it stands, this changing of objects into ideas really changes little but their names, as Berkeley himself is willing enough upon occasion to maintain.

But this only changes the names of things, and leaves the issue with the materialists untouched.

Suppose that the hill in front of me is an "idea." That need not make any difference. If every time I lift my eyes to it, under the proper conditions, I see it; if every time I set out to go to it and take the right road, I find it; if, that is to say, I find all that I should have found had the hill been, as we put it, "there"; then to all intents and purposes it is there. If to discover that the hill is an idea

or set of ideas makes no difference to the order of my perceptions, then it is all the same as though the hill were still so much material substance out there in space. Having made things ideas, all that we require is that their order be maintained. If that is secured, then all the change we have made is that this inert material substance which is outwith the mind, and therefore featureless and unknowable, has been got rid of, as so much superfluous lumber. But to put away that is to put away very little. That is not what was doing the harm. Matter, in this purely abstract sense, was probably not postulated by any except a few extreme theorists.

The defect of it: that, logically, we still see no need for anything except what is given to sense.

But if, with the best of goodwill towards Berkeley in his laudable war with the materialists, we press him for a cogent account of this super-sensible order, he rather badly fails us. The fact is, Berkeley does not see where the virus of the bad doctrine he is so piously anxious to destroy, really lies. So little is it detected by him that he even adopts it into the bosom of his own system, and leaves it there to be exposed, eventually, to his most serious discomfiture, by the more penetrating mind of Hume.

There is nothing distinctive in Berkeley until we can justify his hypothesis of a Deity. Short of that he changes the names of things, but no more. Now, it is when he is pressed for evidence in support of this, that Berkeley fails

to satisfy Hume's more exacting standards of evidence.

IV

Hume's exposure of the defect.

The fate of Berkeley's new way of ideas at the hands of Hume is well known. Without ceasing to be a Berkeleian idealist, only choosing to be a consistent one, Hume finds himself back, if not exactly beside the materialist, at any rate equally far away from any theism. He gets at the essence of the matter. The principle which appears in Hume's philosophy, the principle "that all distinct perceptions are distinct existences," is the presupposition without which Berkeley's own cannot take a step.

It lies in the atomism of Berkeley.

We may leave aside for the moment the question whether the objects we encounter through our various senses are to be called things or ideas. Berkeley's vital assumption about them is their internal discreteness. Locke can leave the substance of the orange out there on the table while taking the colour, taste, smell, etc., into the mind, precisely because they are separable from it as also from one another. Berkeley can work his philosophical scheme only because he assumes that what I see has nothing internally to do with what I touch. The blurred little man who is the sign to me that there is a clear-outlined man out

there at a certain distance, has no more connexion with the man I could come up to and touch, or for that matter with the man I see when I come up to him, than have the letters on the printed page with the sound of the word which they signify. The connexion is equally factitious in both cases. That is why the system needs a Deity. It is made up of parts which have no inherent need for one another, and so far as their internal nature is concerned could go into any order, or none, equally well. That "the extensions, figures, and motions perceived by sight are specifically distinct from the ideas of touch called by the same names," that there is not "any such thing as an idea or kind of idea common to both senses," * is the nerve of Berkeley's whole reasoning.

This atomism is present, in principle, in the whole school of thought to which Berkeley belonged.

Hume's simple observation is, that if this principle is adhered to there can be no knowledge of God. The ideas are distinct and separate. Each is simply as it is given. Inherently, therefore, any ideas may come in any order, anything may happen anyhow. Our assumption of anything which is not simply another idea, anything over the ideas, which should guarantee their order, a God or, for that matter, an objective causal connexion in nature, is a sheer assumption. There is nothing within reach of knowledge to give us the right to make it. We have here the final upshot of

* *New Theory of Vision*, section 127.

that separating-off of the secondary qualities from their substance, whereby Locke began what Berkeley completed. That initial loosening of the data of sense from their anchorage in a substance is really a resolution to take everything we encounter as being—what it is just given-as. It therefore precludes us, as Hume saw, from any knowledge, not only of what Locke and the materialists still called substance, but of God, personality, or causal connexion; since none of these could be reached as a given datum of experience. Berkeley could only reach his Deity by doing precisely what he would not allow the materialist to do, transcend the actual data of sense.

And this atomism is the realism we are seeking.

Now this taking of the real to be what it is given-as, is the doctrine which we propose to call realism. Berkeley does not provide its contradictory opposite. It is itself of the essence of Berkeley's own position. Its opposite only begins to appear in Kant. We call it realism because Hume, by practising it more faithfully than Berkeley, relieved Berkeley's system of all the idealistic construction that could ever have been said to be in it.

Judging by this standard, we seem to have realists at the present day. And such realism has found a point of contact with current social movements, a fact which is testified to, both by social theory appearing over realists' names (I am thinking here of Russell), and by the social movements to which realistic philo-

sophy has given encouragement (I am thinking here of Bergson). It belongs to future chapters to justify the connexion between the realism we have just elucidated and these two names.* We hope to be able to show that the connexion is justified, and that by bringing together this whole phase of current thought, and this phase of current social tendency, difficulties common to both seem to raise their heads—perhaps in the hope that we should take some heed of their warning.

V

Realism is the reverse not of *any* idealism but, properly, of *constructive* idealism.

A helpful understanding of realism will never be attained by trying to oppose it to Berkeleianism. You need to go to Kant. Berkeley's doctrine is one which changes nothing till it is pressed; and when it is pressed it turns precisely realistic. If by calling things mental you mean to do other than change their names; if you hope to effect anything; if a transference of objects from an "outer" world to an "inner" is really to be accomplished; then the objects must be separated from one another. They must be taken as given—that is, without all the interconnectedness which, except as just given, they possess. The principle that the objects with which we have to do are all distinct

* See chapters VIII and IX below, for Bergson; and chapter VIII, section iv, also chapter X, sections vi–viii, for Russell.

and separable is the nerve of Berkeley's position. But by keeping to this principle, as Hume saw, you lose substance, you lose God, you lose personality, you lose even causal connexion out of the world; and—what Hume probably did not see—if you carry out the principle in absolute and thorough bitterness, you lose everything. The whole order of things collapses into an indescribable concourse of momentary apprehensions. There is no "nature of things" any more. That there should seem to be so, that such concourse of momentary sense data should ever come to wear such an aspect as is presented by "all this mighty frame of the world" is an inexplicable and impenetrable mystery. The only way out of the impasse is the way Kant took. You must begin at the other end. You must take the concourse as the mystery; say that it, as just given, is not real; that you only approach reality as you synthesize and gather it together, categorize and construct it. You must accept the paradox, if such it be, that no given object is at all, except as connected. Reality is connexion. To be apart from those links with other things, into which everything proceeds to introduce itself immediately it meets our apprehension, is to fail of reality. The ultimate reason why you must synthesize, construe, and construct, when seeking reality, is that even to refuse to do so is itself a kind of construction, the inverse construction which we have spoken

of before,* a construction which is arbitrary and grows the more arbitrary the longer it is persisted in, like the a-morality which syndicalism tries to substitute for the morality which it discards.

* Chap. III, section ii.

CHAPTER V

BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY—THE BACKGROUND

Summary and forecast.

In the first three chapters of this study we took a survey of recent social movements and discovered their characteristic feature to be a certain ascendancy of the economic motive and failure of the political motive, as the stimulus now prompting to social change. The wider aim tended to become supplanted by one narrower and nearer. The desire to further the good of a State seemed to be retreating, in the socialist mind, before the more immediately real desire to secure the economic advantage of a class. Our surmise was that something analogous was discernible in the field of current thought.

The theoretical trend in question consisted of whatever in recent thought was genuinely realistic, whether appearing under that title or under some other; and we devoted the previous chapter to showing what "realistic" meant in this connexion. We sought to define the term historically and by opposition to idealism; the idealism, however, of Kant rather than that of Berkeley. So defined, realism emerged as the

bent of mind which is averse to construction. Realism is a predilection for the immediate and given. It is the spirit which would fain take the given as it is given, and stand by it, at whatever cost, as long and as literally as it can.

Our next task is to lift into clear view, making use of this definition, the realistic element in certain aspects of modern thought; and for this purpose we take two representative schools and consider them in order; that of Bergson, who is the best of all the pragmatists, and that of Russell, who appears to be one of the most consistent of the realists.

With Bergson, the first thing we shall find it necessary to do is to reconstruct the background of his thinking. For although he is in every sense a living writer, the background upon which he inscribes his philosophy already belongs to the past. It must be recovered if those characteristics which we take to be central in his teaching, and which stand out against it as against a foil, are to be exhibited truly. This will be our endeavour in the course of the present chapter.

I

Bergson an idealist by intention.

Philosophy in the widest sense is man's effort to render the general nature of things intelligible to himself, to read it, construe it, or in

some way make sense of it as a whole. Behind the effort two motives may always be discerned, operating with various degrees of prominence. One is the desire to be sure about the universe, whatever its character may be. The other is the desire to find its character friendly. Neither of the two is ever altogether absent, but almost always one predominates over the other; and it sometimes seems as if almost all philosophies might be classed under one or other of two heads according as they chiefly satisfy the one of these aspirations or the other.

If every philosophy were perforce to be thrust into such a classification, there can be little doubt under which heading the philosophy of Bergson would have to fall. It is an instance of the effort to find the universe friendly. If all philosophers are either idealistic or realistic in their main drift, he is an idealist. His idealism is not perhaps satisfactory. We shall find that it is not sufficiently virile to transcend realism and absorb it. It retains, raw and unreduced, a thick strand of the very quality which gives its title to official realistic philosophy and which appears under another form in the social movements we have sketched. It succumbs, in other words, to the fascination of the immediate.* Yet seen in what we take to be its true historical setting, it is an

* See next chapter, section iii and the following sections. Also chap. VII, section iv.

idealism. Its setting, then, is what we have first to reckon with.

II

Bergsonism is part of a wider idealistic movement.

It seems historically correct to recognize almost a class of modern philosophies which have sprung into existence in response to what might be called the challenge of natural science. Speaking very roughly, there arose during the earlier half of the nineteenth century a certain vogue of science and of the philosophy of science, which fascinated thinking men and to a remarkable extent impregnated general culture. One picturesque embodiment of it is the figure of Herbert Spencer setting out in the fifties upon the great adventure of showing how everything in the whole round of human interests is to be rendered scientific: ethics, politics, sociology, religion, even, in a manner of speaking, science itself. In the same spirit, although perhaps less ambitiously, worked such teachers as John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain; and many lesser names might be added to the list.

A movement which was directed against a certain "scientific" (naturalistic) spirit in metaphysics,

As the period went on, this whole line of activity awakened a reaction, a widespread and many-sided recovery, by philosophy, of something nearer to the classical line of its idealistic development. Bergson's thought is a somewhat late product of that reaction. To understand it, we must ask what especially was

reacted against, in the general philosophy of science. To this question we probably find a less clear answer in any of the English thinkers than a little earlier, in France, in certain aspects of the teaching of Auguste Comte. There is no better way of elucidating the background of the whole anti-scientific movement in philosophy than by trying to apprehend the nature of Comte's philosophical impulse.

one of whose best exponents is Comte.

Comte's activity coincides roughly with the second third of the nineteenth century. By the time he came into prominence two great forces—scientific discovery and rationalistic criticism—had long been combining to give to the intellectual world a set and direction which his philosophy, in its earlier phases, went far to strengthen and confirm. On the one hand, criticism had shaken the foundations of religious belief. On the other hand, science had been steadily piling up, over against the crumbling fabric of dogma, an impressive accumulation of authenticated truths, truths which invited criticism, which could prove themselves reliable, and which, besides being reliable, could place their genuine usefulness beyond doubt. At a time when religious doctrines were already under suspicion, under suspicion both as to whether they were true and as to whether it served any good purpose to have people believe them, the teachings of science appeared as being both genuinely authentic and productive of good—if not of good in the religious sense,

Comte's philosophical impulse. His belief in science.

yet of a good of very real and tangible sort—in the command they gave man over nature, in the assistance they gave him in preventing famine and disease and in promoting all the finer amenities of life. There was no wonder that to many enlightened minds it seemed as though science were destined one day to take over from religion the entire direction of social life, and as if the sooner that day came the better.

This conviction appeared full blown in the youthful mind of Comte. That science was the power of the future, and that social life was destined to be governed wholly by it, and to rise to unexampled heights of improvement under its leadership, was one of the main inspiring motives behind all his earlier thinking. A "social renovation based on a mental revolution" was what he looked forward to as the programme of the immediate future: a mental revolution which should consist in men's learning to accept the leading of science alone regarding every department of doctrine; and a social renovation which should follow from the ordering of society wholly in the light of what science tells us of the nature of things. Science must obtain scope. To restrict it to the inorganic world, or to any special field, was an absurdity. It was absurd to trust it to tell part of the story of the universe and go elsewhere for the rest. Salvation lay in taking science alone for our guide, allowing it to deal with all kinds of facts, inorganic and vital,

social and moral, æsthetic and religious, without discrimination; this, because it alone gives us truths which we can really believe, and acting on which we find ourselves really in tune with the nature of things.

III

In one form or another the general ideal of science which inspired Comte inspired many militant thinkers both in his time and later. Besides those already mentioned it governs the work of men of such different minds as Huxley, Romanes, Tyndal, Lewes, Clifford, and many others; notwithstanding the fact that some of them, for example Mill, criticized very severely the general scheme of philosophy and politics which it led Comte to set up.

The point in the attitude of this naturalistic spirit, which came to be resisted: its radical intolerance of all that was anthropomorphic in the native mind of man.

This scientific ideal of thought was reacted against; and the element in it which provoked rebellion also comes clearly to light in Comte. To state it at once: the ultimate reason why thought could not rest in a policy of merely perfecting the scientific explanation of things, is that science cannot do with those "warm and dear" characteristics which man's native anthropomorphism prompts him to read into the phenomena of the universe—science cannot do with these, while human philosophical thought cannot ultimately do without them.

Comte is specially interested in intellectual

For Comte

all progress depends on the gradual uprooting of anthropomorphism.

progress. His reading of history is that all other forms of human progress depend upon progress in thought. And he believes that he has found the secret of the whole forward movement of human thought in his "law of the three stages," which prescribes expressly the uprooting of anthropomorphism. The method by which this end is brought about, as conceived by Comte, is easily comprehended and is in many ways very full of suggestion.

The anthropomorphic tendency as it appears at first.

In the beginning of human affairs, according to Comte's "Law," man is confronted with the facts and events of surrounding nature, and sees very little in them but haphazard. He does not understand the happenings in nature, cannot anticipate them, is always being taken unawares by them, and so his first interpretation is—caprice. Everywhere is evidence of the capricious. Supernatural beings, with whims and wishes like his own, make the sunshine and the storm, bring the harvest or send the blight. They seal up the rivers with frost, they loosen the rocks in thaw. They beset all man's path. He sees them in the bubbles on the brook, hears them howling in the wind. Traces of their doings, inimical or friendly, are over all the phenomena of nature, even the most stable. Why does the tide ebb? A great beast out there in the ocean is swallowing up the water. Why does it flow? The beast is spouting it forth again. This first stage which Comte recognizes in human thought

The nature of the fallacy in it, according to Comte.

persists long—even after the later stages have begun. It is the kind of thing which still sets men praying for harvests or for deliverance from the epidemic, or for victory. Its most baneful characteristic persists too. This is that it puts people off the scent, sends them seeking for the source of things in the wrong place, i.e. in something quite other than the things themselves. This is the miscarriage of principle. Man at this stage of thought is put off the track of the actual forces with which he has to do instead of being put in the way of understanding and using them. Progress depends on his unlearning the habit. Instead of praying for health, man must learn to observe the laws of hygiene. Instead of praying for victory, he must look to his powder and shot. The principle is, study the phenomena themselves; find how they are connected with other phenomena; do not look away from them in search of something quite other than they, which you suppose governs them. There must be no "looking away to God." Phenomena are subject to no external agency. No power makes them act as they act. They simply do it. And science is the attitude of mind which is solely concerned with what actually occurs: its question is, in what sequences do phenomena take place, and what coexistences among phenomena are regularly observable? With any external reason why they happen, or what makes them happen, it has nothing to do. It

only asks how events, as a matter of observation, take place—in what groups they come, and in what order.

The method of its removal.

The anthropomorphic tendency, however, is deep-rooted in man. It is profoundly natural to him to see in external events the manifestation of some power somehow akin to himself. It only becomes rooted out by very slow stages. And one at least of the stages described by Comte makes the nature of the process specially evident.

For there is a point, still short of science, but nearer to it, where, instead of taking the cause of the change he observes to be an external being with a will, man contents himself with ascribing it to a "power" of producing this change—without specifying the power further. This is the stage of intellectual progress which has furnished the satirists with their jokes, and which Comte agreed in associating with Mediævalism. The device, when taken as an explanation, is palpably empty. It clearly only repeats the problem. You take opium and you fall asleep; to proceed to explain that this is because opium has a "power" of causing sleep, is only to serve us again with what we knew. But Comte sees great promise in this. You are shut up, now, to the phenomenon. Even your explanation only sends you back to it. The "power" or "essence" in the thing which accounts for its properties and behaviour is all that is left now of the supernatural being who performed the function

earlier. And his fading away to a shadow in this fashion is simply his hint to us that he must disappear altogether. Deep-rooted as is the tendency to find ourselves in nature somehow, true explanation is never reached until the last vestige of it is rooted out. This is attained only when we have completely got over the tendency to ask "why" about things. Such a question assumes that some mind or other must have arranged them so, and must have had reasons. The full-fledged scientific spirit is only concerned with the actual coexistences and sequences of phenomena. It asks what coexists with what, and what follows what. Beyond the answering of this question as fully as possible, it has no office or task.

The ideal of knowledge according to Comte.

IV

The general philosophical revolt, of which Bergson's philosophy is a very late manifestation, is directed against the sentence of banishment which the scientific spirit passes upon anthropomorphism. Comte, in passing such sentence upon it, was very much in the stream of all that was living in the thought of his own time. The spirit of it was carried out with much thoroughness in many spheres of thought first and last. With reference to Bergson, what interests us most is the operation of this counter-anthropomorphic tendency in the

The operation of this general naturalistic ideal of knowledge in the field of psychology. It explained away the "self."

sphere of psychology. The procedure of natural science became the model for psychological investigation. Just as in chemistry the aim was to discern in all chemical phenomena simply what was actually taking place, to see what elements there were, and under what conditions they took the shape they took and performed the operations they performed; so in psychology it was to be seen how, from the simplest observable phenomena, by following the laws of their behaviour, we could account for the building up of what we now know as the mind with its endless faculties and powers of expression. In the psychological field the whole current of this thought discouraged the postulating of any sort of abstract entity called the "mind itself" which in any way manipulated or used, combined or separated the observable feelings, volitions, ideas, etc., which compose our inner life. In this sphere, as in others, there was to be no appeal to an external being, however attenuated. There was no more need for an abstract "self" to account for the phenomena of the mind than there was for an abstract "vital force" to account for the vital functions in a plant. To speak of a self which "has" its perceptions or emotions, as distinct from the mere collection of these perceptions and emotions and other phenomena themselves, was pretty much as though one should have spoken of a "body" apart from the organs and acting as their possessor. Just

as the body is made up of the organs and is nothing but their sum, so the mind is its phenomena and is nothing but their sum.

The thinkers who specially worked this general hypothesis in the sphere of psychology did not require always to be so explicit as this, and were not. Huxley, for example, takes Hume to task for going too far when he says in his treatise that "what we call a mind is *nothing but* a heap or collection of different perceptions united together by certain relations and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity or identity." This "nothing but," says Huxley, is on Hume's part a clear going beyond what his data warranted. "He may be right or wrong, but the most he or anybody else can prove," says Huxley, "is that we *know* nothing more of the mind than that it is a series of perceptions." * Huxley is agnostic in the matter. He is willing to allow the possibility that there is something in the mind beyond the reach of observation. Still, the fact remains that we know nothing of it. And even if there were some in this general school who went further and did not even profess agnosticism, still the school as a whole was so preoccupied with analysis and derivation, so occupied with exposing and anatomizing the mind into its atomic elements and accounting for its various faculties and powers

* Huxley's *Hume*; see his *Collected Essays*, vol. VI, p. 74 (Macmillan, 1894).

by building them up out of these according to supposed laws of their combination, that the residual "self," if any, that was left after their analysis, could not but be read as marking the mere limit of their scientific success. The whole trend of the actual work done is confirmatory of the Comtist view of what science should aim at. It would be the triumph of the method to be able at last to regard the mind simply as a coming together of so many natural phenomena, amongst which science enables us to settle with exactness what coexists with what, and what follows what; resolving the whole of that supposed separate entity called the soul, which was formerly considered able to manipulate all the elements, into a mere play of the elements themselves.

V

One attempt to reinstate the self—Martineau's.

The whole issue, as between the "scientific" manner of addressing philosophical problems and that cruder method which the general scientific school considered superseded, but which seemed still to contain a truth which philosophy apparently felt it must somehow rediscover, comes out remarkably clearly in the distinction drawn by Dr. James Martineau between his own position and that of Herbert Spencer, as regards the psychology of the moral self.

Martineau belongs to the reaction. In his philosophy is found, perhaps, the simplest and most direct form which the return movement took. He simply reinstates the "soul" in its old shape and invests it again with the power of handling its own "phenomena" and of making free choices between the courses which its own desires suggest. Thus he characterizes the moral judgment—our ordinary apportionment of praise or blame in matters of conduct—as a judgment passed upon a self for the choice it has made between two motives which simultaneously confronted it and solicited it, and which were both equally possible to it at the time the decision was taken. After pointing out that, if there is to be a case for moral judgment of our conduct, either of the two motives must have been possible; having shown, i.e. that it must depend upon the self's choice as between them, and not on their struggle with each other, which course was taken; he introduces a discussion of this "self" of ours which, in all such cases, must make the choice, and upon which the eventual action depends.

"Yes," he makes an objector reply to his discourse, choice "depends *upon ourselves*. But what do I mean by *myself*? . . . Simply," continues the objector, "*my character as it is*, made up by inheritance, temperament, experience, formed habit, and self-discipline: of this aggregate from the past, with the outward

motives from the present, every decision must be the result; and if the second factor is treated as the thing *given*, then the casting vote is vested with the other; and it is the *character* . . . which decides." "Now," replies Martineau, "I do not deny that the Self which chooses includes all these things; or that each of them has its influence upon the choice—the instinctive impulse, such as the brutes obey; the persistency of habit which runs in the old ruts; the previously formed disposition and cast of thought; nor do I doubt that, by skilful estimate of these, it may often be possible to foresee how I shall determine a given problem of conduct. But I cannot allow that *these exhaust the Ego*, and give a complete account of all its actual and possible phenomena."

"Besides the *effects* of which I am the accumulation," Martineau continues, "I claim also a *personal* causality which is still left over, when my phenomena have told me the tale of what they are and do; thus pleading guilty to the charge of illusion which Mr. Herbert Spencer brings against those who suppose that 'the Ego is something more than the aggregate of feelings and ideas, actual and nascent, momentarily existing.' * When he tells me, 'You *are* your own phenomena,' and I reply 'No, I *have* my own phenomena, and so far as

* Martineau's reference here is to Spencer's *Psychology*, Part IV, chap. ix.

they are active, it is I that make them, and not they that make me,' how will he show me that this is an illusion? How strip me of the consciousness that I am the same permanent subject of varying feeling and the single agent of repeated action, and not a shifting product of factors ever new? It is useless to quote the rules for the comparison of momenta, as if the balancing of reasons must conform to them; that is only to *assume* the very point at issue—viz. the identity of mechanics and morals; and something more than assertion is needed to make me believe, that what settles an alternative for a human mind is the same that defines the line of a doubly struck moving body. When I judge my own act I feel sure that *it is mine*; and *that*, not in the sense that its necessitating antecedents were in my character, so that nothing could prevent its coming; but in the sense that I might have betaken myself to a very different act at the critical moment, when the pleadings were over and only the verdict remained." *

VI

The background to Bergson's philosophy.

Martineau's defence of the self is symptomatic of the tendency of philosophy to return towards its own channels. Votaries of science

* Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, third edition, vol. II, pp. 39–40.

had been emboldened by its success in damaging the prestige of religious dogma, to look forward to a time when "scientific" methods would be the only methods practised in any department whatever of human knowledge. A strong current of thought had set to work upon psychological, moral, and social problems in this spirit. And the whole provoked a reaction. The reaction was against the root-and-branch dismissal of anthropomorphism. It was felt that a truth remained at the heart of anthropomorphism which human knowledge could never make itself complete without. The reaction took place in other spheres than that of ethics, psychology, and metaphysics. It is to be found, e.g. in the return of vitalism in biology. But even within the former fields it took many forms, of which the theory of Martineau just alluded to is one, that of James Ward is another, that of T. H. Green another. All of these could be described as different phases of the return of philosophy to idealistic channels after its sojourn in the fields of naturalism. We have drawn attention to this sojourn, because it forms the real background to Bergson's philosophy. Bergson, too, belongs to the general return movement. In our next chapter we shall try to bring out what is characteristic of the special shape the movement takes, under Bergson's hands.

CHAPTER VI

BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY—THE FOUNDATIONS

Bergson, like Martineau, will reinstate the self.

WE have been considering the "idealistic reaction against science" characteristic of thought during the later part of the nineteenth century. It took place in other fields than psychology and ethics, but it was most important there; for it meant the reinstatement of the soul. Everywhere it appeared, it consisted in the effort to recover what germ of truth there was in that anthropomorphism which is universally characteristic of the natural mind of man, and always colours his first reading of the world; and in the sphere of psychology and ethics this involved, as Comte rightly saw, the reinstatement of the soul.

In the philosophy of Martineau we see the most direct shape which the reinstatement took. There the soul was restored *simpliciter*. A captain was once more put in command of all those mental phenomena or states of consciousness into which the scientific school had threatened to dissolve and disperse man's mind. But this is not by any means the best form that the movement took, or the best that was

in the situation. It has all the weakness of a mere reassertion of the position criticized. It has nothing really to answer to the old charge that to put a self in command of the phenomena, only solves the problem of their behaviour by postponing it; that it makes the self or the extraneous agency into the very problem that the phenomena themselves were.

A much stronger line of argument than Martineau followed would have been to abide entirely by the scientific spirit, confront the phenomena themselves till they yield their own secret, even to admit that there is no self but these phenomena; and to perceive, if possible, what mistake in the common reading of them has led to the view that they do not really make up a self—what we have always called a self—of themselves. Now this is the line that Bergson took. His theory is an intuitionism, but unlike Martineau's intuitionism it intuits selfhood in the phenomena, it does not intuit an atomic self over and above them.

I

His way of doing it.

The first of Bergson's three chief works, *Time and Free Will*, is little else than a proclamation of the fact that genuine selfhood exists. It is an investigation into the immediate data of consciousness. More particularly,

it is an inquiry into the "scientific" assumption that states of consciousness are amenable to measurement; an inquiry the result of which is to show the direct negative.

Bergson's "state of consciousness": he denies (*a*) its quantitativeness, and (*b*) its separateness from other states.

Bergson points out that whatever mental phenomenon you care to take—a feeling, an idea, a desire, an emotion, an effort—if you ask closely what happens when there is said to take place an increase in its quantity, you find that it is really a change of quality; whereupon, as a matter of course, mensuration is out of the question.

This qualitative change it is which makes us say that an attachment has deepened, or a pain increased, or a joy become more intense, or any psychic state whatever augmented itself. It arises from the fact that the state in question has been gradually penetrated by more and more other states and has been penetrating them in turn. Potentially all states of consciousness do thus interpenetrate.

Whence he thinks he is enabled to assert selfhood and freedom.

Now this is simply another way of saying that potentially the states of consciousness make a self. The act or word or other expression which comes out of them, when they are in this interpenetrated state, is the deed of a self. Whence arises at once Bergson's main conclusion; that our acts are free—that they are ours—just in so far as in the moment of action our whole being has gathered itself together into an intense unity of interpenetrating elements and in this state given itself

expression in a deed. There is nothing in the whole transaction in the least suggestive of the detached self of Martineau, deciding between rival motives, as between "claimants who have entered its court." The whole object of Bergson is to show how the very elements into which selfhood had been dispersed by the empirical, associationist, or "scientific" school do of themselves, when rightly seen, compose a self; and how on this account the deeds which are the outcome of them are still really its.

II

Associationism, for Bergson, spells determinism.

Bergson everywhere connects the two views, the associationism which assumes the separateness of the various elements in the composition of the mind, and the determinism which denies freedom to the will.

"Associationist determinism represents the self as a collection of psychic states, the strongest of which exerts a prevailing influence and carries the others with it. This doctrine thus sharply distinguishes coexisting psychic phenomena from one another. 'I could have abstained from murder,' says Stuart Mill, 'if my aversion to the crime and my dread of its consequences had been weaker than the temptation which impelled me to commit it.' * And

* Bergson is quoting Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, fifth edition (1878), p. 583.

a little farther on: 'His desire to do right and his aversion to doing wrong are strong enough to overcome . . . any other desire or aversion which may conflict with them.' * Thus desire, aversion, fear, temptation are here presented as distinct things which there is no inconvenience in naming separately. Even when he connects these states with the self which experiences them, the English philosopher still insists on setting up clear-cut distinctions: 'The conflict is between me and myself; between (for instance) me desiring a pleasure and me dreading self-reproach.' * Bain, for his part, devotes a whole chapter to the Conflict of Motives.† In it he balances pleasures and pains as so many terms to which one might attribute, at least by abstraction, an existence of their own." And instancing Alfred Fouillée, as he might have instanced Martineau, our author goes on to note that even "the opponents of determinism agree to follow it into this field. They too speak of associations of ideas and conflicts of motives. . . . Here, however," he says, "lies the danger. Both parties commit themselves to a confusion which arises from language." Language, he declares, separates. It is not meant to convey all the delicate shades whereby inner states merge into one another. And the associationist thinks that states are distinct, while in

* *Examination of Hamilton*, fifth edition, p. 585.
† *The Emotions and the Will*, chap. VI.

reality it is only our words for them that are distinct.

The fallacy of associationism.

"I rise, for example, to open the window, and I have hardly stood up before I forget what I had to do. 'All right,' it will be said [by the associationist], 'you have associated two ideas, that of an end to be attained and that of a movement to be accomplished: one of the ideas has vanished, and only the idea of the movement remains.' However," continues Bergson, "I do not sit down again; I have a confused feeling that something remains to be done. This particular standing still, therefore, is not the same as any other standing still; in the position which I take up, the act to be performed is, as it were, prefigured, so that I have only to keep this position, to study it, or rather to feel it intimately, in order to recover the idea which had vanished for a moment. Hence, this idea must have tinged the mental image of the . . . movement with a particular colouring, and this colouring, without doubt, would not have been the same if the end to be attained had been different." Here Bergson gets at the weakness of language and the damage done by it to the finer nuances of our experiences. Language, he says, would still have expressed the movement of rising in the same way, even if I had risen to do something else; "and associationism would have distinguished the two cases by saying that the idea of the same movement was associated this time

with the idea of a new end: as if the mere newness of the end . . . did not alter to some degree the idea of the movement to be performed, even though the movement itself remained the same! We ought, therefore, to say, not that the image of a certain movement can be connected in consciousness with images of different ends . . . but rather that movements, geometrically identical outside, look different to consciousness from the inside, according to the end contemplated. The mistake of associationism is that it first did away with the qualitative element in the act . . . and retained only the geometrical and impersonal element: with the idea of this act, thus rendered colourless, it was then necessary to associate some specific difference to distinguish it from many other acts. But this association is the work of the associationist philosopher who is studying my mind, rather than of my mind itself."

"I smell a rose," Bergson says, knitting up his argument, "and immediately confused recollections of childhood come back to my memory. In truth, these recollections have not been *called up by* the perfume of the rose: I breathe them in *with the very scent*; it *means all that* to me. To others it will smell differently." *

An idea, then, is not associated with another

* Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, English translation, pp. 159–162. Italics mine.

idea. It is literally penetrated by it. Ideas are not separate. They are bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh. And the same holds of all other states of consciousness.

III

In what Bergson's conception of selfhood is weak.

But has Bergson genuinely reinstated the self? We hold that he has not; although not for the reasons sometimes assigned.

One of his most powerful critics has taken Bergson to task for the use he makes of the notion of "space." Bergson suspects the presence of this notion wherever separateness appears; as, in the passage last quoted, between the idea of "this scent" and the other ideas which, upon the associationist's theory, are associated with it; or as, previously, between my idea of rising from my seat and the idea of going to open the window. Bergson, says Mr. Bertrand Russell, has given no reason for his view that every plurality of separate units involves space.*

This criticism does not seem to us to state the real weakness of Bergson's position; and yet it aptly introduces the point in which, considered as a reassertion of idealism, Bergson's view lacks strength. There is nothing fatally mistaken about his regarding separateness as

* See *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 15 (Macmillan and Co., 1914).

spatial. What is really serious is his assumption that that separateness which he chooses to call spatial is incompatible with selfhood; and that consequently a selfhood *minus* this "spatiality" should be all the selfhood he reinstates.

There is no need to insist with Russell that separateness does not involve space; and his connecting of the opposite view with a certain peculiarity of mind in our author * was entirely uncalled for. Even if it were true that the author had some peculiar personal habit of "visualizing" his problems, as Russell insinuates, the most that could in that case be attributable to it would be his choice of words to describe a separateness which he happens to be able to see more than usually clearly. His peculiarity would be responsible for his calling the separateness space; and the sole error in that would be the somewhat venial one of possibly straining language.

The important matter is to apprehend clearly the sense in which Bergson thinks separateness fatal to selfhood, and to see whither this view ultimately leads him. We shall see that it leads in the end to a disparagement of the intellect and an aversion to the constructive work of thought, which leaves his reading of the moral will simply realistic, and also, incidentally, open to the very interpretation which recent social movements want to put upon it.

* *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 16.

We shall best bring out the peculiarity and weakness of Bergson's defence of free selfhood by contrasting it with that of the writer who perhaps has the best claim to be regarded as the central English exponent of the later nineteenth-century reassertion of idealism, T. H. Green of Oxford.

IV

The difference between Bergson and Green, on the point.

For T. H. Green the very separateness which people find between things in nature and carry over into their interpretation of the mind, the very separateness between objects which occupy different places in space, or events which occur at different times, so far from being destructive of selfhood, is seen to imply it and necessitate it, whenever it is closely considered.* This is his chief difference from Bergson.

For Green selfhood is *involved* in the distinctness of things for thought; for Bergson it is *lost* there.

Consider, for example, succession in time, one event following another, the strokes of a hammer on a bell which I count up as they pass. If the succession which my knowledge or any possible knowledge discloses here, be indeed real, then the successive moments of it —these successive strokes—do not simply pass away. They go into the past, yet they exist; they are held together or somehow hold themselves together in an eternal present. For

* The reference here is to the discussion on "The Spiritual Principle in Nature," *Prolegomena to Ethics*, §§ 19–54, and similar discussions.

when I know them, when I am apprehending them in their order, then they are copresent. *Qua* knowing, I am their compresence. So that, what really is, wherever anything emerges into the light, is the compresence of elements which are given as simply separate; interrelation in a unity, of what is given as a number of separate and different items. Moreover, it is their relation which gives the items their character. "Abstract the many relations from the one thing, and there is nothing. They, being many, determine or constitute its definite unity. It is not the case that it first exists in its unity and then is brought into various relations. Without the relations it would not exist at all." *

Here we have phenomena confronted and a reading taken of them, which shows them of themselves constituting selfhood; precisely what we had in Bergson. But here, what constitutes selfhood is spoken of as interrelation. Bergson prefers to speak about interpenetration. The difference is that with Green the full measure of selfhood has not come until thought has begun to dawn, whereas with Bergson true selfhood requires a deeper, more intimate, more narrow and blind and intense unity than thought, and thought when it comes is the failure of selfhood, its dispersal. Thought disintegrates; only something other than thought keeps whole.

For Bergson selfhood requires the "interpenetration" of states of consciousness.

* Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, § 28.

On Bergson's showing the intense unity of interpenetrating items which true selfhood is, is something to which thought cannot do justice. Thought can only work with hard blocks; it can piece these together, "associate" them. But with a living element in a living whole, penetrated and made what it is by its associates, it can do nothing. What was wrong with Mill and Bain was not, therefore, merely that their thought went astray over the problem of selfhood. It was that they trusted thought at all. They did, and perhaps did rather well, the only kind of thing that thought can ever do in the way of rendering intelligible the nature of our inner life. Their mistake was in trying to think selfhood, intellectually. It was not that they mishandled their instrument; it was that they took an instrument which they should not have used. Now, a selfhood which cannot survive thought is hardly really selfhood. If thought scatters selfhood, the self is hardly reinstated. Herein lies Bergson's weakness.

V

Bergson's description of "interpenetration."

Bergson's philosophy shares the aims of a good few other philosophies in that it sets out to be a criticism of naturalistic metaphysics. Its peculiarity is that it leaves the world of matter and space standing; it only insists that the methods which reveal *their* nature must be changed when it comes to dealing with the

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inner life; for a different state of affairs obtains there. There thought, which is at home in space, can get nothing to bite upon. The present mental event is not separated from past ones; it is not even barely related to the past; it actually contains the past in its fibre; the unity of past and present is like Milton's marriage of the celestials, where each penetrates the other's being entire.

The last audible "click" of a series to which we have not been attending actually contains the previous ones; so much so, that I can still count them. Yet not as they exist do I perceive them when I count them; in counting them I set them out side by side in a series, whereas they exist inextricably fused together into a unique and indiscerptible quality.

"Whilst I am writing these lines the hour begins to strike upon a neighbouring clock, but my inattentive ear does not perceive it until several strokes have made themselves heard. Hence I have not counted them. Yet I only have to turn my attention backwards to count up the four strokes which have already sounded and add them to those which I hear. If I then question myself upon what has just taken place, I perceive that the first four sounds had struck my ear and even affected my consciousness, but that the sensations produced by each one of them, instead of being set side by side, had melted into one another in such a way as to give the whole a peculiar quality, to make a kind of musical phrase out

of it. In order, then, to estimate retrospectively the number of strokes sounded, I tried to reconstruct this phrase in thought: my imagination made one stroke, then two, then three, and so long as it did not reach the exact number four, my feeling, when consulted, answered that the total effect was qualitatively different. It had thus ascertained in its own way the succession of four strokes, but quite otherwise than by a process of addition, and without bringing in the image of a juxtaposition of distinct terms. In a word, the number of strokes was perceived as a quality and not as a quantity; it is thus that duration is presented to immediate consciousness, and it retains this form so long as it does not give place to a symbolical representation derived from extensity." *

Bergson's whole motive for describing so intimately this interpenetration in which he finds selfhood, is to force home the view that the intellect cannot grasp it. Clearly, it is a self which cannot be thought, that he is reinstating.

VI

The weakness of a self which cannot be construed in thought: Bergson on language and social life.

We may say that Bergson almost recovers the self which associationism and naturalistic metaphysics had dissolved away; but that he falls fatally short in that he finds it only

* *Time and Free Will*, English translation, pp. 127–128.

beneath the level of thought. Everything in which selfhood would be prized appears to be above that level. A self which cannot be apprehended in thought cannot reveal itself through the characteristic products of thought. It cannot therefore reveal itself in language and social institutions. Thus we find Bergson denying that the real character of our inner life can either be expressed in words which follow the rules of language or in deeds which conform to the conditions of an established social order.

We use words, primarily, to enable us to deal with things; and things exist outside each other. Language is not adapted for the expression of things that interpenetrate. It is, therefore, not adapted for expressing the nature of our inner life. It distorts it, breaks up its unity into mutually external elements, shows it refracted through the distorting medium of space. A critic might suggest here that it was rather hopeless on this showing to attempt a philosophical exposition of the true nature of our inner life at all; since every exposition must use language. But Bergson admits this. His own very exposition is handicapped, he says, since he can only express himself in language. He cannot properly tell us about that unity which is not one of juxtaposition, but one of fusion. "Thus I said that *several* conscious states are organized into a whole, permeate one another, gradually gain a richer content, and might give . . . the feeling of

pure duration; but the very use of the word 'several' shows that I had already isolated these states, externalized them . . . to one another, and, in a word, set them side by side; thus by the very language which I was compelled to use, I betrayed the deeply ingrained habit of setting out time in space."

Yet language is a *conditio sine qua non* of all social life. Our tendency to form a clear picture of the externality of things is the same, says Bergson, as the impulse which leads us to live in common and to speak. Still, it is a distortion. What finds best expression in social life is not our real inward self, but an externalized spatialized version thereof. Without implying that there are two personalities in man, we can say that the real or inner personality is obscured by having to adapt itself to social life. It becomes encrusted in a kind of hard rind. "A second self is formed, which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another and are easily expressed in words." *

VII

The weakness of a self which cannot be construed in thought:

Not only does Bergson deny that participation in social life is any true expression of the real selfhood which he has

* *Time and Free Will*, English translation, p. 128.

rescued from the wreckage which naturalism has made of the soul. A large proportion of morality would seem to provide no scope for it either.

Bergson on Ethics: his *Laughter*.

Bergson has not explicitly written on Ethics. But he has a work, the real burden of which is an interpretation of the moral and social life. This is his little treatise *On Laughter*. His thesis in that work is that laughter is a species of social castigation. It is designed to rid society of the conduct that provokes it. And the question for the moral implications of Bergson's teaching is, what is it whose destiny it is thus to be socially castigated? Startling as the answer may seem, it is the moral. In the wide sense in which Bergson uses the term, it is the intellectual-spatial. But in the concrete, as represented in this little essay, it is simply faithfulness to principle where such faithfulness is awkward. In other words, it is the very soul of the moral life, in so far as that is anything distinct from the æsthetic life. This disbelief in space and the spatial, this disbelief in the negation which is at the root of these, is what the present writer has called the pessimism of Bergson.*

Without repeating here what has been worked

* See articles in the *Hibbert Journal* for October 1912, the *International Journal of Ethics* for January 1914, and *Mind* for July 1918. There may be compared with the positions maintained in these articles, a discussion on *Bergson, Pragmatism, and Schopenhauer*, by Günther Jacobi, in the *Monist*, vol. xxii, pp. 598 ff.

out elsewhere, reference may be permitted to one significant point in elucidation of this view. It concerns Bergson's first illustration in *Laughter*, his picture of the runner who stumbles and falls. It is a small matter, of course, but it has always struck the present writer as a peculiarly significant accident that Bergson should have opened an essay on laughter by taking as his first example of the ridiculous precisely that figure which has served so many moralists for their type of the moral life. The runner of Bergson's illustration, as Bergson describes him, with his eagerness and his "rigidness," with his omitting to look where he is going, his stumbling over obstacles and his abundant inability to adapt his conduct as circumstances require, and follow the sinuosities of his crooked path, is indeed ridiculous. But it is only Bergson's light vein that makes him so. In essentials the man might be Bunyan's pilgrim fleeing towards the wicket gate, or St. Paul's runner, who also heeds nothing either right or left, but simply "presses toward the mark." Of course there would be nothing in a mere illustration, but that this one is so absolutely well chosen. This *is* the type of man—this steadfast man, this man who just is *not* sinuous and yielding and pliant and graceful and free—*this* is the type whose proper destiny, according to the whole tenor of this essay, is to be laughed out of society. This is the man for whom society has no use.

We shall not press the point that in this early essay Bergson appears to have had a different conception of society and the social; that the very man who is afterwards said to be adapted to the requirements of social life is the man against whom, in this early piece of writing, society is represented as having to protect itself behind a screen of laughter. The chief point is that he is here constrained to condemn the moral man as he has later to condemn the social man, if the good consists in getting the self he has rescued expressed. Here in morality and later in social life he sees only the means whereby the true self is obstructed and repressed. The whole is the result of the effort to revindicate selfhood by finding the true self elsewhere than on the thought-level of conscious life.

VIII

Self and world.

In *Time and Free Will* Bergson lays the foundation of his philosophy by showing that, to use a later phrase, we must "reverse the habitual direction of the work of thought," in order to reach the reality of the inner life. In his later works he goes on to show that in order to reach the reality of the world around us, we must similarly undo the constructive work of thought, the thought which distinguishes things and relates them, and must have recourse to

something which shows them fusing or interpenetrating, something which is nearer to instinct than to thought, and which he names intuition. This superstructure will be the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY—THE SUPERSTRUCTURE

From psychology to metaphysics.

In the previous chapter we showed the foundation of Bergson's system in the view that man's inner life was not capable of obtaining true expression through the medium of thought. We are next to show that this inner life, for Bergson, is part of a universal life of the world, which is similarly incapable of being properly construed in thought. It too, in order to be known as it is, must be known directly, through that mode of acquaintance more intimate than thought, to which Bergson eventually gives the name of intuition. To use an expression alluded to already,* the life of the world, to be apprehended at all, must be apprehended "integrally."

If we are to feel the full power of Bergson's teaching as a force in the hands of those who would use it in the field of social and political life, we must follow him here as he passes over from psychology to metaphysic. For what had been a theory of the soul, to him, becomes now a theory of the universe. If he is right,

* Pp. 38–41.

then whatever cause can claim to be in accordance with his theory of the soul can equally claim to be in accordance with the very nature of things; a circumstance which is calculated to enhance immensely any inspiration which Bergson's theory of the soul of man is capable of giving to any plan for human welfare which can feasibly claim to be faithful to his psychological teaching.

I

Bergson on mind and brain: *Matter and Memory.*

Bergson has confronted three great problems in succession as his speculation has developed: those of selfhood, of the relation of soul and body, and of evolution. To each he has devoted a classical work. The first is discussed in *Time and Free Will*, the second in *Matter and Memory*, and the third in *Creative Evolution*. The second of these, his discussion of soul and body, or the relation of mind and brain, is rather of the nature of an interregnum or interlude in the course of his thought. It forms the bridge across which we pass from his psychology to his metaphysic.

The unique view of the relation of mind and brain developed in this work was the result, it is to be gathered, of a perfectly independent investigation of other than metaphysical questions. From a close study of pathological

cases of loss of memory, it appeared that the phenomena connected with the disorder were only to be made properly intelligible if they were understood to point to a failure of the cerebral mechanism to keep consciousness within bounds, i.e. within the channels necessary for practical life. What caused the trouble was a sort of bursting of the material banks by the pressure of the conscious stream. Upon failure of the restraining function of the brain what occurs is really "a greater dilatation of the whole personality, which, normally narrowed down by action, expands with the unscrewing of the vice within which it has allowed itself to be squeezed, and, always whole and undivided, spreads itself over a wider and wider surface." "That which is commonly held to be a disturbance of the psychic life itself, an inward disorder, a disease of the personality, appears to us, from our point of view now, to be an unloosing or breaking of the tie which binds the psychic life to its motor accompaniment, a weakening or impairing of our attention to outward life." *

What the brain does: it controls.

It appears, then, that the physical brain is an organ whose function is not to cause consciousness, but simply to control it. The brain simply keeps consciousness attending to the work of life. So far from causing or creating consciousness, or, in the crude language of materialism, secreting consciousness "as the

* *Matter and Memory*, English translation, p. xiv.

liver secretes bile," the cerebral mechanism does in fact only restrict to definite channels a consciousness which otherwise would spread far beyond the limits to which, in normal life, it keeps; and to which, in order to secure success in the struggle for existence, it must keep.

It controls the inflow of something (a "life") whose nature and source do not lie open to thought.

Let us return now to Bergson's fundamental view as indicated in the previous chapter. It concerns selfhood. It consists in taking the self as something whose fundamental character must be intuited and cannot be thought. This selfhood is not a mere abstraction. It is plainly something which emerges, grows, and disappears again, as human beings are born, grow old, and die. The suggestion lies to hand, therefore, that the universe is of the same nature as it. This selfhood in each of us, which cannot be intellectually construed or grasped, must come from somewhere; it must somehow well up from the general life of the universe as from an infinite reservoir. The life of the universe itself, then, is something which similarly can only be intuited, and cannot, in its proper character, be grasped by thought. This is the kind of metaphysic which Bergson raises upon his psychology.

II

Thought as an interpreter of the

Bergson finds confirmation of his view that the nature of life does not lie open to thought

in some of the difficulties encountered by science in understanding the life of the world. Such, pre-eminently, is the lesson to him of the deadlock in biology over the interpretation of evolution. At root this is a difficulty about the time-process. Evolution takes place in time. Time cannot be grasped in thought. Thought, once awake, can count, e.g. how many strokes of the clock have fallen upon my ear when I was not attending, if they happen not to have been too many. But in counting them it arranges them in a different way from the way in which my inattentive ear was absorbing them. It arranged them out distinctly, whereas in my immediate consciousness they were fused. This is how thought misses time. It merely sets out successive moments in a sort of mental row, whereas in our most intimate experience of time the moments fuse, all the past ones being telescoped into this present one.

world: Bergson on evolution theories.

The common defect which vitiates rival evolution theories is that they have no means except thought, whereby to represent that time-process which is called evolution. In consequence, they are condemned to the view, either that the evolution of life is a series of mechanical adaptations to accidental circumstances, or that it is the fulfilment of a static plan. The particular characteristics which any species now has must either be something accidentally produced by the obstacles against

which the species happened to come up, during the course of development; or else they must have been aimed at all the time and purposefully attained. The one of these views is mechanism, the other finalism. Neither of them will do. The explanation gets into insuperable difficulties whichever way you take it. The reason is that evolution is a movement in time, and the real nature of time always slips through the net which thought spreads for it.

The mechanical view of evolution.

In the case of mechanism, the difficulty is fairly easy to see. It takes as the directing cause of evolution what is at most only one of its conditions. Why has a certain animal form emerged as it has done? Why is the tiger striped? To what does the eagle owe his sharp claws, the chaffinch his power of building an invisible nest? Mechanism explains by pointing to the hazards of the long evolutionary journey, the obstacles the species has had to meet, the competition it has had to encounter, and derides the suggestion that just this form of claw or these particular stripes were aspired after by the species from the beginning, and that they are there for that reason. Mechanism is right thus far, that any species which failed to adapt itself to the circumstances it met would certainly go under. But "it is one thing to recognize that outer circumstances are forces evolution must reckon with, another to claim that they are the directing causes of

evolution." * They no more explain the fact of the evolution process than do the hills which carry the road which leads to the town explain the fact of there being a road there. If there is to be a road to the town, then the shape of the hills through which it must pass will partly explain its windings. But that is all. Given certain obstacles which must be got round, then, no doubt, evolving life could only get round them by taking these and these ways, or by shaping itself into species with these and these characteristics. But there was nothing in the obstacles to show why life should evolve at all. Why should not the forward current of life have stopped, as parts of it have stopped? for "certain foraminifera have not changed since the silurian epoch." What the lingulæ were in the remotest times of the palæozoic era, that they remain to-day, "unmoved witnesses of the innumerable revolutions which have upheaved our planet."

The view called "finalism."

But finalism is equally little a true rendering of the facts. To it, evolving life has a programme before it, a final end towards which it moves. But a plan is the work of thought, and to represent the course of evolution as the realization of a plan is to attempt again, in another fashion, to translate the time-process into terms of thought. This is no better than the representation of the process of time as the

* *Creative Evolution*, English translation, p. 107.

working of a hard mechanical system. For as time passes, something new appears. The process, as Bergson insists, is creative. To revert to the illustration of the clock, the second stroke gains a new quality from the fact that the first is fused with it. The third is different from either, and the fourth from any of the three, and so on. The past trammels itself up into the present, giving it character; and since every present has a different past to take character from, every present is something that never was before, something quite new-created. So that the real course of things in time cannot be the realization of a plan. For a plan is old. A plan is a taking of a scheme, built up from present and past experience, and projecting it into the future. The realization of a plan is the realization of something essentially not new, but built up from the present and the past.

The idea of a plan is the idea of something which is simply to be fulfilled once for all. After that there is to be no more. It bespeaks, not free agency, but agency restricted and limited. Evolution is something better than that. "A plan is a term set to a labour; it closes the future whose form it indicates. Before the evolution of life," on the contrary, "the portals of the future remain wide open. It is a creation that goes on for ever in virtue of an initial movement. This movement constitutes the unity of the organized world—a

prolific unity, of infinite richness, superior to any that the intellect could dream of, for the intellect is only one of its aspects or products." *

III

Bergson's own view of evolution.

In determining what place the animal kingdom has in the general scheme of things, and what place man has in the animal kingdom, Bergson goes by their genesis. He follows out his conception of life as a stream or force, gradually making its way forward against obstacles, and bifurcating or spreading out sheafwise as it goes; the various living species being the channels it has found for itself. At the first main splitting, one part of the current goes to form the animal, the other to form the vegetable kingdom. The former branch makes a further bifurcation, one current making towards the evolution of instinct and finding its supreme manifestation among certain species of insects; the other evolving itself towards intelligence or thought, which is only really reached in man.

Man and animals.

Man's place in the animal world, and indeed in the nature of things as a whole, is unique. Between human intelligence and any other sort of mind there is this great difference, that in it the course of evolving life is still finding its

* *Creative Evolution*, English translation, p. 110.

way forward, whereas in all others it has practically come to a stand. In the beginning the stream of life was one and whole. In its course it has branched in all directions and run up a million different and diverging canals. But these have proved a million blind alleys. In man alone is the main current to be found. There alone is it still flowing on. Man is not at the head of creation, therefore, in the old sense in which it was understood that the rest of creation was made for him; or in the sense for which Aristotle is mainly responsible, that man includes in his own being the main features of the creatures below him. The diverging currents of life which have taken those other courses, so far as they still proceed at all, tend to get farther and farther away from the stream which carries on through man. But man's position is unique in that what flows through him, creating his organism and brain as its channel, continues indefinitely. Man has doubtless kept something of the life which has gone off along other lines of evolution, but "only very little." Describing the stream as a whole, the universal consciousness or life-force (the *élan vital*), Bergson says, "It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call as we will man or superman, had sought to realize himself and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way." "The losses are represented by the rest of the animal world and even by the vegetable world,

at least what these have that is positive and above the accidents of evolution." *

IV

Bergson interprets the world which is without us by the spirit which is in us, and thus far is an idealist;

It will be clear how closely the general scheme of Bergson's philosophy brings him to the great idealists. He gives almost exactly the place to the spirit of man which they gave. Precisely in our own inner life did they too encounter the reality of the world. For him as for them reality is not matter, but consciousness. Moreover, like them, he disclaims solipsism as clearly as he disclaims materialism. The consciousness whereof all things are made or in which they subsist is not the individual's own consciousness. There is no general collapse of things into ideas in our heads. No thesis is put forth by either school to the effect that you and I and other minds like ours are all that exist. The consciousness referred to is in both cases literally universal. It is over all the world. It is what evolves in the life of the world. The external world still exists. What is said is simply that it is conscious, and is the product of its consciousness.

but not by the *rational* spirit that is in us, and thus far is an imperfect idealist.

It is equally clear that Bergson differs from the great idealists, and in the way indicated in our last chapter. Consciousness is the nature of things; but not consciousness *qua* thought.

* *Creative Evolution*, p. 281.

Hence if we will really enter into the nature of things the garment in which we must go clothed, is not thought, but something else.

"Metaphysic," says Bergson,* "is the science which claims to dispense with symbols," and so claims to enter into the nature of things. Natural science works with symbols and so cannot. Science must work with symbols because it works with thought.

It is not to our rational spirit, he says, that we apply for a vision of things as they are: the world is not rational.

There are, in Bergson's view, two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing, be it a moving material body, a living person, or a creature of the artistic imagination. "The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it." Only when we enter into the object do we have it as it really is. So long as we are only moving round it we only see it from one or another point of view. We may learn something relatively true about it from the outside, but we only know it absolutely, or as metaphysic wants to know it, when we know it from within.

Now there is an intellectual sympathy whereby we can enter into another's character, see the world as it appears to him, and see his own life and his merits and faults as he sees them himself. To Bergson there is a similar exercise of intellectual sympathy whereby you can enter into the movement of a falling stone or a flying arrow and get it as it really is, and

* See the opening pages of his *Introduction to Metaphysic.*

thereby escape all the puzzles you fall into by looking at it from the outside and trying to reconstruct its motion in terms of thought. Now since, as science is proving more and more every day, all reality is everywhere in movement, this intellectual sympathy which Bergson calls intuition, is what is required if we are to enter into the real nature of things. The true instrument of metaphysic, therefore, is intuition.

Just as our inner life, our selfhood, dissolves into a multitude of separate states if we try to express it in thought, so the nature of the world, which is movement through and through, disappears into a multitude of separate "immobilities" if, following science, we try to express it in thought. The pursuit of metaphysic is simply the methodical attempt to intuit reality instead of rationalizing it. "*To philosophize . . . is to invert the habitual direction of the work of thought.*" *

V

Where Bergson's doctrine really fortifies the spirit of man.

His identification of reality with movement, movement with life, life with consciousness, and consciousness with the intimate unity of selfhood is what has led people to characterize Bergson's philosophy as a philosophy of action,

* *Introduction to Metaphysic*, English translation, p. 59. Italics he author's.

and has encouraged us to call him (above) the chief of the pragmatists. Its supreme attractiveness, as has been justly pointed out, is the enhancement it seems to give to the spirit of human freedom.* In this more than in anything it appears to lift the heaviness from man's vision and restore to him his universe friendly once more.

One, at least, of the sources of doubt to the reflective mind of man, seems to pass away if this general view of the world should be found to hold. The very reservoirs from which the life of human society is fed, are not likely to give out. For the life which throbs through all the institutions and speech and thought of social humanity is the same life which bursts into evidence on every hand in all the myriad phenomena of living nature. The most prominent and entirely obvious characteristic of the world's life is its inexhaustible abundance. Along all the fertile belts of our globe, in every most unexpected nook and cranny something grows; grows in abundance; nay, grows in such luxury that if it be any one of innumerable species of living beings, it would cover the whole surface of the earth with its progeny within a quite measurable number of years, if its competitors would but make way for it. The amount of life which is crowding through to the light is inconceivable, take it all in all;

* See H. Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, pp. 185–186 (Macmillan, 1914).

and from everything that we can see, the amount of it which appears is as nothing to the amount that is kept back. The tide whereon we advance, then, is at least abundantly able to bear us forward.

Besides placing these infinite reserves behind the life of humanity, the place which Bergson's philosophy reserves for man is such, that through him the potentialities of the life of the universe come to an expression infinitely richer than through any other being. In this sense, man is free.

Here is a doctrine which, as the author rightly claims,* has a direct bearing upon life and practice. It unites the sense of freedom with the sense of invincible strength. Caught in the great rush of that common life of which he and all humanity is a part, the individual is given to feel his solidarity with his kind. He is not isolated from his race. His race is not isolated from the rest of the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom itself joins with that of the plants, in the great life-procession of the world. "As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system . . . so all organized beings from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. All the living hold together, and all

* See, e.g. *Creative Evolution*, p. 285.

yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and behind and before each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death." *

VI

The "realistic" ingredient in it.

It is easy to give oneself up to this greatly conceived version of the nature of things in the midst of which our human lot is cast. Not in recent times has any more penetrating, more delicate and beautiful mind approached the ancient problems of metaphysic. What we are here specially to keep in view, however, is the fact that these results are gained at the expense of the intellect. It offers man a great place. But it is one he can accept only in so far as he can forbear to take himself as being what, by his thought, he naturally construes himself as. It is a hard condition, and one closely connected with the realism which characterizes the work and forms the feature by which it is linked to the social forces to which we have adverted. It is time to turn and ask wherein that realism lies.

* *Creative Evolution*, English translation, pp. 285–286.

CHAPTER VIII

REALISM IN BERGSON

THE thesis to which the foregoing chapters have been leading up is that there is a realistic trend in recent philosophy which reveals between it and some important recent social movements a fundamental identity of spirit. It is with a view to substantiating this thesis that we have been considering the philosophy of Bergson. Our task now is to raise the double question, wherein lies the attraction of Bergson for social movements of the syndicalistic type, and wherein consists his realism? Are they by any chance to be found in the same place? Do they consist in the same feature?

The realism in Bergson is what attracts the syndicalist.

We shall have no hesitation in answering in the affirmative. The attraction which syndicalism sees in Bergson is due to the fact that his philosophy seems to put its imprimatur upon a social policy of instinctive action. Now this is a perfectly genuine feature of his teaching. Moreover, it is the realistic feature.

Bergson is in spirit an idealist. His whole philosophy takes its place amongst the movements wherein philosophy took up the challenge

It emerges in his rendering of the will.

of natural science and reasserted its traditional conceptions. And the general picture of the universe which Bergson means to give us is the reverse of realistic. But his achievement does not come up to his aims. His rendering of the subjective side of the life of mind is not idealistic. He leaves us with a realistic human will.

I

Realism seems to mean—both in philosophy and in ordinary language—the keeping of the *given* inviolate.

In order to detect the realism in Bergson we must recall our definition of the term. We have seen reason for defining realism as the opposite, not of any and every sort of idealism, but properly of constructive idealism. It would not have been necessary to insist upon this, were not idealism itself so commonly misconceived. Idealism is not, as is so often assumed, the view that the universe is made of mental stuff. It is not a theory of the stuff of things at all, but of their structure. It is not interested in the question what the world is made of, but in what it is made into. The true opposite of the doctrine is that the reality of things is not constructed, but given, and that to reach the given is to reach reality. The justification of the opinion that there is realism in Bergson is all a matter of holding fast to the distinction between a Kant-derived and a Berkeley-derived idealism, and defining realism

by opposition to the former and not to the latter.

We evolved this view in our fourth chapter. We do not believe that the conception of realism so arising is out of relation to ordinary usage. The word is used in ordinary intercourse with abundant looseness of meaning, and we noted the fact that it had become so worn and debased as almost to incur sentence of banishment from the vocabulary of philosophy. But it seems to us that the historical meaning we have chosen for the philosophical term is very nearly the nucleus of the ordinary usage still.

As a term of ordinary language, the word realism can appear in the most various quarters. But the thing, it seems to us, can appear in as many without losing a certain simple and fairly definite identity. Realism the thing is a temper of mind. It is the temper which wants to meet reality, and means thereby, not reality arranged for show, but reality naked. There is a sense in which, in almost any of the higher human pursuits, a man may resolve to take his raw material raw. A musician or a novelist will achieve a certain character if he resolve as far as possible to take his materials—his sounds or his situations—as he picks them up, and not to practise on them, to nearly the usual extent, that selection which pleases. There is the spirit which worships *das Vorgefundene*. Conscious theory apart, there are

people whose practice presumes a value in things in virtue of the mere fact that they are to be found. This we take to be the spirit of realism. It is a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. It loves the neglected given.

Is the aspiration after this sort of thing a characteristic feature of Bergson?

Now, although we should not think of thrusting upon Bergson always and everywhere this spirit of keeping the given inviolate which we take to be the spirit of realism, yet its traces are to be found in his treatment of the will. One cannot well forget, when such a suggestion is made, that the work on *Time and Free Will* in which the foundations of his system are laid, is really a discussion of the given; that it proclaimed the fact in the very title which it bore when it first appeared. It is essentially a work on *les donnés immédiates de la conscience.* The note of realism here plainly suggested merits a somewhat careful examination in the light of the meaning we have found in realism.

II

How would it work out if it were?

Let us ask, how should one proceed in a treatment of man's will or of his practical life, in order to be as faithful as possible to the realistic spirit? Not, in any case, after the fashion of idealistic politics. "The State is the individual writ large." "The State is a kingdom of ends in which every one is both

sovereign and subject." "Obedience to civil law is simply the will submitting to its own higher and saner self." "As a citizen the individual approves the laws he obeys and obeys the laws he approves." "The coming of democracy is the coming of freedom." Why are such statements as these so plainly not the language of realism? Because, as we think, the attitude they bespeak is one which conspicuously does not determine itself by reference to man's given will. Such language refers to a freedom and a sovereignty and an expression. They are the freedom, the sovereignty, and the expression, not at all of man's given will, but if of anything, of a will so sublimated as to find in the established institutions of society its aptest instruments. To be realistic we should require to lay more emphasis on the given nature of man.

As realism distrusts any idealizing in regard to facts—any working-over of the given so that it shall appear other than it is just given-as—so, in regard to the will, it distrusts all this sublimation. The realist seeks to begin at bed-rock want as he sought to begin at bed-rock fact. As real fact is in the last analysis "this now here before me," so real want is "this gap or lack now here in me." The realist finds both in the same fashion. To find what he really wants he has to let himself go for the moment; he has to slack out, resign the effort to do anything to whatever appears, say to him-

self "just this now felt here in me," idly allowing to the "this," the "here and now" and the "me" the full emphasis which they draw upon themselves. Bed-rock is the uncontaminated given.

III

In precisely such a manner, we reply, as there is a clear tendency in Bergson to approximate.

Now the human will, under the treatment accorded to it in Bergson's pages, does show the tendency thus to shrink inwards towards the given. It does tend to identify itself with that which is non-constructed along the lines on which the mind of man naturally constructs.

Bergson suspects the intellect in the region of the highest active expression of man's nature. Artist as he is, the wholly admirable life exhibits to him firstly grace. We saw it already in the theory of laughter, the great social cleanser, whose prey is the awkward—that is, the mechanical-spatial, or, in another aspect, the intellectual. And as the intellectual is a thing to be laughed out of a proper society, so it is a thing to be dispensed with in a properly free will. Bergson believes that man is free. But he rests his case on the non-intellectual character of the free decision. So far, then, as the intellect and what involves its guidance—systems of thought, language, ideals, social relations—constitute the mind's native work of construction, so far the human will

becomes human by being non-constructed. Its direction is away from these things. Its freedom is its power to withdraw from these, recoil upon itself and act without them. You find the characteristic human will just when you find it able to escape or undo its own native movement. Here we have, in another way, the maxim: let the non-rationally constructed suffice. The theory takes as the will, that which does not intellectually construe and predict, that which is given as the will, apart from the work of rationalization. Herein consists the realism of it. To sum up: the realism in Bergson consists in the affinity between what he says is the true nature of the will and what the will is first given as; in the child or in the animal. The point of affinity is its being not rationally constructed; in other words, the unpredictableness of its movements, its incalculableness.

This realism the seat of the attraction for the syndicalists.

Now the realistic ingredient in the system of Bergson explains what might otherwise appear a strangely fortuitous historical fact, the fact to which we have been constantly referring throughout this study, the grafting of Bergsonism upon the new socialism by some of the most penetrating observers and exponents of the latter, e.g. M. Georges Sorel. The alliance is no such mere chance as it appears. The syndicalists love incalculableness. That is a feature of the given will. And Bergson's involuntary benediction upon the given, his

anti-intellectualism, is precisely fitted to encourage them.

IV

The syndicalists love the given will, for its incalculableness.

We are not certain that Bergson has taken any public notice of the interpretations which the syndicalist part of his following have put upon him. On the merits of the case, it is not easy to see what reply he could render, assuming that he disagreed with them. One line would, indeed, be open to him to take. He could say that from his teaching no set of persons had any right to deduce any programme for the future improvement of mankind whatever. But what he could reply to a plea from the syndicalists of not guilty on this charge; what he could answer to a protest that they had not done this thing, that, on the contrary, the very charm of Bergson's doctrine was that you could not get a programme out of it, that they did not want a programme, that it was their very policy to go on without one—does not appear. And this is precisely what the newest socialism through the mouth of its chief prophet has been saying for some considerable time. The mission of Sorel, as he himself has conceived it, appears to be, not to tell the working classes about the new regime they are to prepare; not to tell them what it is to be and how it is all to come; but to tell

them just that it will not be, if they plan it, and to warn them not to have to do with the intellectual bourgeoisie who profess to plan it for them. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald did not overstate the case, when he said in 1912, six years after the appearance of *Reflections on Violence*, "Sorel says quite candidly, 'I cannot tell you what is going to happen, I am mainly interested in getting action.' The reformist syndicalist says, 'Act wisely'; the syndicalist revolutionary, of which Sorel is the teacher and the philosopher and, above all, the poet . . . says, 'Do not bother about the adverb, be quite sure of the verb; you need not necessarily act wisely, but, in the name of everything you hold good and dear, act.'" *

Now Bergson endorses this. He cannot help it. It is, as we have seen already, and as we shall see in greater detail in the next chapter, in the very cast of his metaphysic.

And Bergson's anti-intellectualism is fitted to encourage them.

We have seen the identity of motive between Bergson's philosophy and Green's; and the difference of procedure between them. The necessity of withstanding the claim of "scientific" metaphysic to take the whole universe for its province, is felt by each of them. To both the enterprise is fallacious. But Bergson's procedure is to attack the scientist's instrument, the intellect and the world of ideas generally. Against these is put up the charge that they do not yield the truth either of what

* See *Sociological Review* for 1912.

is within or what is without, either of man's inner personality and its creativeness, or of the creative evolution going on in the world around him.

In this account of things there appear two features, and it is worth noting how they both suit the syndicalist.

We are shown what is at work making the universe, and we are shown that it is beyond man's intellectual powers to comprehend. What is at work is life penetrating matter. A vast single force has been occupied ever since the beginning of things making a stupendous upward thrust against resistance. Evolution is the story of how this *élan vital*, forcing its way up, has canalized matter into ever more and more complex configurations, until at length, through the inconceivably intricate channel of the human brain, it bursts into the light of full consciousness. This side of the story suits the syndicalist, inasmuch as it gives the *locus* of any social movement which can take itself sufficiently seriously. The world-life itself must be what is taking further shape in all the further progress of humanity. The foremost movement, whatever it happens to be, must constitute the crest of the advancing wave. This, of course, is the rôle which syndicalism conceives itself to play.

The other feature of the doctrine is that the life-force escapes the comprehension of the intellect. Its nature cannot be rationalized. Its further track cannot be mapped out, fore-

seen, or arranged for. Freedom of will is at root freedom of the *élan vital*, and unpredictability is of the essence of Bergson's conception of freedom of will. This precisely suits the syndicalist in what he feels has been wrong with the old socialism from the beginning. The old pioneers of socialism gave you a finished sketch of how the new socialist State was to be all arranged. They built Utopias. They kept mapping out all the perfection that was to be. Marx temporarily lifted socialism out of all this, but only temporarily. There arose an order of creature after him, peaceably-minded Revisionists, Fabians, *et hoc genus omne*, smoothing over his sharp points and toning down his martial spirit, who are regarded by the newer lights with abundant loathing. Now Bergson helps to define those bourgeois within the camp, and of course one cannot despise a set of persons properly till one has defined them. Those people profess interest in socialism. But they are "intellectuals." They make plans, they study sociology, they amass statistics, they write books. They see how the great programme is all going to work. They have even tried to commence the working. They have put on their big spectacles and taken up their long forceps and begun to patch and to doctor. After Bergson, what does all this mean but that they are just what their name implies—that they have become the dupes of the intellect again, have tried to act

like beings who could foresee, and not simply sought to lie back on the running flood, spread their sails to the winds of God, and await the grand catastrophe?

A realistically conceived will, disporting itself in an idealistically conceived universe; a will safe in the bosom of the vast and friendly tide of which it is a part, with nothing to do but let itself be swept forward; such is the situation which gives Bergsonism its point of contact with recent social movements. The syndicalist who saw how well such a metaphysic suited all his purposes would have been more than human had he not taken advantage of it.

V

An objection: granted that syndicalism welcomes incalculableness in action; is this relapse upon the *given* a feature, after all, of either realism or Bergsonism? Is there not more in realism than this, and more in Bergson?

We have said a great deal about the will "letting itself go," and about thought being content to take reality as it is "given." These, to us, are the features of realism. As if in anticipation of some such criticism, Bergson has taken many occasions to insist that there is another side to his teaching. In his little work, *Introduction to Metaphysic*, written, apparently, just before he had completely elaborated his theory of creative evolution, nothing is more conspicuous than the author's anxiety to show regarding his central metaphysical conception—that intuitive consciousness of duration wherein, on his showing, lies

alike the characteristic activity of man's mind and the true revelation of the nature of things —that the apprehension of it, so far from being a mere acceptance of something, or being anything easy, involves the greatest effort. Philosophy does not consist in watching oneself merely live, "as a sleepy shepherd watches the water flow." "To talk in this way," says Bergson, "would be to return to the error which since the beginning of this study we have not ceased to point out. It would be to misconceive . . . the essentially active, I might almost say violent, character of metaphysical intuition." *

Now, since easiness or facility is precisely what we have been finding realistic in Bergson, we must consider whether this claim to "violence" is substantiated, in any way which makes a difference. Here we shall endeavour to indicate the root of the difficulty, reserving fuller consideration of it till the next chapter.

We say that realism loves the given. It worships *das Vorgefundene*. It wants what is to be had for the mere admitting. It takes to easy things. But is there not something arbitrary about this whole conception? Are we not simply refusing to take account of what is an outstanding characteristic of realism, its strenuousness, its thoroughness? If we recognized the thoroughness present in what we are pleased to call Bergson's realism, would there then be anything to quarrel with?

As to realism, there *seems* to be more in it; but there is not.

* *Introduction to Metaphysic*, English translation, pp. 47–48.

Now we do not at all object to admitting that realism is indeed thorough. Glaucon in the *Republic* was complimented on his thoroughness. But fundamentally, this is not its character. Realism only possesses the peculiar sort of thoroughness which bespeaks an effort to take things easily.

Realism is thorough in this, that while it adopts what just meets the eye, it yet to a certain extent mounts guard, is very vigilant in refusing to adopt what just meets anybody's eye. There is such a thing, for it, as a prejudiced eye. There are minds which never see the naked given, people whose habit is to " take the higher view of things." They are unfamiliar with the crude, not in that they have never seen it, for it comes into every human lot, but in the sense that even if for once in a while some sudden outcrop of the stark and ugly does happen to leap into view for a moment and be seen, such minds are so made that they do not retain the vision ; they cannot dissever this basilisk-glance from the rest of the picture ; they cannot help dragging in along with it the thousand and one other things which go with it and help to compensate for it, and eventually overlay and transform it, and make it not, perhaps, good, but far less crudely evil than it seemed. Such minds have an eye of their own for the world, an eye which always does a certain work upon the real, bringing it into the light of other things, and thus instan-

taneously, besides seeing, estimating it. The realistic temper is not going to adopt whatever meets this type of observation. It does not accord therewith. It would seize the reality before such work on it has begun, or it would take it up after the effects have been stripped off. The realist, as radically as he may, will "cut" the idealizing; and this, whatever his pursuit, poetry or music, history, drama, story-telling, or anything else. His thoroughness is genuine. But his thoroughness is also negative in character.

If this characterization is sound, the realistic spirit as we have defined it, can be strenuous. It, nevertheless, still is what we have taken it to be, the desire to take the given as given, and not do anything to it. In the literal sense of the words, it is against work. We make bold to say that as in other things, so in philosophy also (although in different degrees according to the species it is of), realism is the apology for mental *ignavia*. It does not seem lazy. It seems strenuous. It is exceedingly strenuous. But this does not invalidate the contention. We have always to ask, in what enterprise? Many lazy people are strenuous—when they are avoiding work. There is no end to what they will undertake with that in view.*

The nemesis of realism.

We have no wish to load the dice in the philosophical game, or appeal to a metaphor

* Compare the "organization which is only systematic disorganizing," in chap. III, section ii, above; also below, chap. IX, section iv.

against any school of thinkers. But between the Herculean labours of the realists and the case we have cited, there appears to be more than a fanciful analogy. Realism has let itself in for a great deal of labour. That, we think, can hardly be doubted. And it appears to be the consequence of its having permitted itself at the first to do something whose seductive easiness was its most conspicuous feature.

The extent of the labour in which realism has involved itself is spoken to by two facts; although in making the remark, I should say that the realism affiliated to Meinong and Russell, not Mr. Alexander's, is primarily in question.* On the one hand, it is committed to opening up in the universe a bewilderingly vast and unexpected field for "mental adventure." There is no end to the things which, on this view, may be. On the other hand, there is a very rapid end to the significant things which we can be sure are. One sometimes wonders what can be the sober judgment passed upon such a book, for example, as Mr. Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*, in a quiet hour, by the class of readers to which it is addressed: surely that very little is quite certainly true, according to this book, and that little not very much worth believing. What the same common-sense readers would think, did they realize how many trivial things are certainly true,

* Although the number of "paradoxes" which Mr. Alexander finds himself needing to spring upon us would seem to involve him a little too.

would be hard to say. I do not know, for instance, with what emotions they would learn, from a perusal of Mr. Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*, this about Socrates and Plato; and it is quite certainly true: that twice Socrates multiplied by Plato with the square of Socrates and the square of Plato added, are the equivalent of the square of Socrates and Plato taken together.* It is not strictly accurate to say that realism has not many certainties to offer. It is just to say that it tends to fill the world very full of very irrelevant ones. Since our minds are so made that they tend to attach importance to things in some sort of proportion to their certainty, this means that it provides us with an extraordinarily unfamiliar and upset universe.

In whose name, we must next ask, is all this work being wrought? In the name, it must be answered, of something very easy, what we can only call the *just-there*. It reminds one irresistibly of the person strenuously lazy. What does the realist feel has been outraged by a long philosophical tradition, except the direct deliverances of our apprehension? What is he doing to restore perspectives except this: first standing idly before the given, being tender to it, abandoning all attempts to construe it, trying simply to *take* it, muttering to himself in succession, "just this," "this *here*," "this here

* *Principles of Mathematics*, section 7. Mr. Russell, of course, says, "if Plato and Socrates are numbers," but that was surely understood.

now," "this *out* here now;" and, secondly, having secured this first, easiest, and idlest of all knowledges, espousing it as the most indubitable truth in the world and driving everything out of the realm of metaphysic which does not leave it inviolate. Here he takes his last stand; all else must conform. If this involves that there be objective errors, then objective errors there must be. If this involves that things must be real which don't exist, then things are real which don't exist. If this involves that every possible appearance is an eternal entity, then an eternal entity it is. Everything in the circle of the realists' horizon must make way for *this-here-now-outside-the-mind*. What is the outcome except the nemesis which overtakes the same procedure elsewhere, the unwilling hard labour of working against the grain of the world, to which those are condemned who will not work with it. The world has a grain. The realists are apparently having to work frantically against it. The explanation seems to be that they have turned and taken it smoothly in the one little corner where it was cross, and now cannot change their direction. This turning upside down of the world of common sense through the effort to take as unmodifiable a very small part of it is less apparent in some realists than in others. It is possibly due, however, only to there being some not so thorough as others. The quandary is in the

nature of the situation. The situation is that realism in its own proper character has crossed over from other forms of human pursuit into philosophy and has brought its fruits with it.

Bergson's claim to strenuousness and his disclaimer of the idleness of the shepherd watching the water flow, if they are substantiated by nothing better than that false strenuousness which we have been seeking to indicate, then they fail to affect the criticisms we have brought. That they are of this character, it will be the aim of the following chapter to show.

And Bergson is in the same case.

CHAPTER IX

REALISM IN BERGSON (*continued*)

Has not Bergson's theory already protected itself in advance against the criticisms we are bringing?

OUR statement that there was realism in Bergson rested on this: that although to him the real is of the nature of consciousness—and although he is thus far idealistic—yet consciousness itself, to him, is what it is given-as. Our charge was that there is an *ignavia* in his method. He says that the real is intuited; and we have replied that to intuit is to accept. Intuition is not the same as thought; it is not construction, therefore, or consolidation of the constructed; it can only be acceptance. In the present chapter we have to ask whether there is anything in Bergson which would enable him to rebut this charge.

I

To Bergson, the inner life as it really is exhibits a kind of togetherness which only appears upon

To Bergson the inability of mere intelligence or thought to reach the real truth of the inner life rests on the fact that the intellect is only at home in space, and that our inner life flows through time. Thought cannot comprehend

time except by translating it into terms of space. Thought can only apprehend a "course" of time. You must allow it to plot out the moments along some sort of an imaginary course or it is helpless. But this is to separate the moments, and to separate moments of consciousness is to falsify them. Consciousness exists all fused together, not in distinct parts.

the cessation of the activity of thought.

Consciousness exists together. In the first place, the items of my conscious mind at this moment—its various present ideas, memories, feelings, etc.—interpenetrate; and to name them or in any way render them in thought is to render them otherwise than as they exist. In the second place, as present consciousness exists together with itself, so it exists together with past. Past moments are falsified when strung out as an antecedent series behind the present. That is not how past moments exist. The past of consciousness does exist. It is not separate from the present. My past is in me still. It contributes still to what I am now. The past of character thus consists simply in whatever the character implicitly contains over and above the impressions or modifications here and now being received.

This is what is meant by saying that consciousness has duration. Consciousness has duration because of the fact that its past still endures in it; it has duration in that it consists of all its own present and all its past gathered up and melted into absolute unity.

The reason why the intellect cannot grasp this unity is that it must articulate and so introduce space and magnitude and number. Inevitably the unity of consciousness figures in thought's description otherwise than as it is.

II

But this spells *ignavia*.

Bergson tells us that in order to reach the truth of the inner life we must take the reverse direction to that which thought takes. We have answered that the suggestion implies a certain *ignavia*. But to offer such an answer is to assume that matters would be different if we did not reverse the path of thought but followed it; that following it would not invite the same reproach; that the path of thought is the one along which the work lies. Is it so? For Bergson plainly thinks otherwise.

At any rate some of Bergson's followers appeared to think so.

We saw in a former chapter how naturally it could occur, at least to certain of Bergson's following to agree with us here; to think that scientific thought meant work, and that the path of intuition was the easier road. Sorel found the labours of sociology, history, economics, morals, etc., all alike superfluous where the question as to the chief end of social man was to be decided by intuition.* But we need not rely upon that. There are passages in his writings where Bergson himself seems to suggest quite

* See above, pp. 88–41.

naturally that it is the nature of intuition to provide an escape from the labour of thought.

In *Time and Free Will* (we should always remember that this is the earliest of his great works) when he is speaking of that experience of listening vacantly to a series of sounds, to which we have had occasion to refer so often, we find him saying that "without any great effort" we can "prevent" the sounds from dissolving into one another, and can set them out in a row in a sort of mental space, by memory. "Without any great effort!" Clearly, the easier way was to leave them alone. And Bergson's description in the same passage, of how we get at the true nature of the succession, is nothing more or less than a description of how we do leave them alone; how we resign the effort in question and simply give ourselves over to vague and idle reverie. The real succession is said to appear when, desisting from all effort to hold the impressions apart, we simply let them melt into one another. Clearly, "He giveth his beloved truth in sleep." To get duration pure, I must cease to act. In order to reach duration, I simply relapse into it.

And Bergson himself appears at times to speak as if it were so.

Bergson is to be found even going so far as to say that we approximate a true apprehension of the self's duration more closely in dreams than in waking life, and suggesting that the animals are habitually nearer to it than ourselves. In sleep "we no longer measure

Bergson on dreams.

duration, but we feel it; from quantity it returns to the state of quality; we no longer estimate past time mathematically: the mathematical estimate gives place to a confused instinct; capable, like all instincts, of committing gross errors, but also of acting at times with extraordinary skill. Even in the waking state, daily experience ought to teach us to distinguish between duration as quality, that which consciousness reaches immediately and which is probably what animals perceive, and time so to speak materialized, time that has become quantity by being set out in space." * Bergson's own expressions thus seem to justify us in taking intuition as an idle occupation compared with thought.

III

Moreover, he sometimes uses the language of strenuousness on occasions when it plainly makes no difference to our present argument.

But if there are places in which Bergson speaks of intuition in the language of idleness and relapse, there are places where he speaks of it in the opposite language. Sometimes even in his early work he has no sooner finished indicating how our impressions fuse with one another in idle reverie (and so are given as they truly are) than he passes on to speak of how much nearer reality we should be if we were always in this condition, and if we habitually "strove" thus to seize our ideas themselves

* *Time and Free Will*, English translation, pp. 126–127.

and apprehend them in their natural state. He speaks in the same vein of our recovering our fundamental self, and of the "vigorous effort of analysis" required in order to do so.* Here we have clearly the language of strenuousness. Is it justified?

In our last chapter † we saw reason for not straightway admitting Bergson's disclaimer to the charge of making his intuition easy, and for continuing to hold intuition to be a mere idle acceptance so far as it was anything distinctive. Our surmise was that it itself was not work, that only in getting at it, was any work of the mind involved. The only work, in other words, was in the effort not to work. And here at least our view is amply borne out. Our "ideas themselves" are explicitly stated in the same passage to be our ideas "as our consciousness would perceive them were it not beset by space," which means, as they would appear before the intellect had got to work upon them or after its work had been undone; similarly the "fundamental self" is the self "as the unsophisticated consciousness would perceive it." Both are really *données immédiates*. They are immediately given, and only need be accepted.

But is intuition *always* idle?

Is this answer sufficient on all the occasions when Bergson makes a similar claim? That intuition is idle, or is at the most a strenuous effort to be idle, is, naturally enough, not at all

* *Time and Free Will*, p. 134. † Chap. VIII, section v.

Bergson's own view. And when he has occasion, particularly in his later work, to illustrate that intuition which reveals the real as it is, he often chooses examples which go far to convince the reader that intuition involves not merely effort, but effort of the genuine order, effort really directed towards the realization of the characteristic potentialities of man.

For Bergson seems at certain times almost to compel a doubt on the point: his higher examples of intuition.

What he dwells upon as examples of intuition, are such notable experiences as those in which an aspiring soul, too long repressed under an uncongenial social system, learns at length to burst through the shackles of convention and find its own kingdom. And even when not thinking upon human life at all, when painting upon his larger canvas, speaking of the great creative force of which the universe itself is the result, his habit is to let those aspects of creation which lie open to the intellect be referred to in terms which suggest relaxation, and the aspects which we can only intuit, in terms which suggest tension. Thus the creative energy has to concentrate itself into life; but as it merely lets itself go it becomes extended matter. The creative energy is of the nature of consciousness; and consciousness is a principle "which has only to let go its tension—may we say to *detend*?—in order to extend. . . ." *

We have here Bergson's habitual later view. The intuition which yields us metaphysic

* *Creative Evolution*, English translation, p. 250.

is to him in every way a genuine effort; an effort which takes man straight to the nature of himself and to the nature of things. What right have we, then, to continue to say that all the labour it involves is essentially a labour of regression; that its effort is an effort to be inactive?

IV

The criticism we are suggesting.

The possibility of such arbitrariness of activity as we have here in mind does not stand in need of further demonstration. It comes to this: that while all work involves labour, not all labour is work. It is the same situation as when soldiers are being trained to march. However hard it may be to get the perfectly uniform step, there comes a time when to "break step" is the hardest marching order of all. The men cannot get out of the habit again. This does not prove that the old careless way of walking was the real achievement, or that the shamble of a set of strolling gipsies is intrinsically more of an achievement than the step of the soldier. The return to it is a hard relapse to make; but it is still a relapse. In the same way, if the "real self" is something from which man's whole effort in the direction of thought was taking him away, the getting back to it may be as "violent" an effort to him as Bergson pleases, it yet need not

be the labour of achievement, but only the labour incidental to the undoing of achievement. Like the syndicalist's organization against the organized life, it may be but a name for the very reverse of that which it *prima facie* seems to be. Our position, then, was that this kind of labour or none is what is being assigned to the philosopher, when Bergson writes in the *Introduction to Metaphysic** that "*to philosophize is to reverse the habitual direction of the work of thought*," and italicizes the statement. Either by doing nothing—"as the sleepy shepherd watches the water flow"—do we, on Bergson's showing, lay hold upon reality; or if by exertion, then by the perverse exertion involved in doing nothing.

The nature of passion.

Now this may hold quite as clearly of those heroic examples of intuition to which Bergson so often has recourse, as of the more trifling ones. When the free personality hits out, upon occasion, against the conventions with which it is surrounded, when "like a man in wrath the heart" rises up against all the superficial constructions of thought and demands scope for itself, all this, as a moment's reflection will show, need not be activity in any true sense. For the agent in it all, the "deep-seated self," so-called, "which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up," rudely causing reason with *its* pondering and *its* deciding to stand about, may only be passion. And passion, as

* P. 59.

has been said from of old, is something we suffer. In passion we are not active; passion is passive.

Remembering the nature of passion, we can see how our criticism may still be applicable.

Our ego ordinarily lives performing a system of social activities from day to day which are established and customary, and are everywhere expected and counted on. When Bergson's "bold novelist" comes along, "tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain" and "showing us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity" we "commend him," he says, "for having known us better than we knew ourselves." That is to say, in making us sympathize with the sufferer under the yoke of convention, and live through the struggle against it, and partake the final triumph over it, the artist is bringing us nearer to our own fundamental self. For our real self is always liable to rise and undo all the best work of our reason at a stroke. "When our most trustworthy friends agree in advising us to take some important step, the sentiments which they utter with so much insistence lodge on the surface of our ego, and there get solidified in the same way as the ideas of which we spoke just now. Little by little they will form a thick crust which will cover up our own sentiments; we shall believe that we are acting freely, and it is only by looking back to the past, later on, that we shall see how much we were mistaken. But then, at the very minute when the act is going to be performed, *some-*

thing may revolt against it. It is the deep-seated self rushing up to the surface. It is the outer crust bursting, suddenly giving way to an irresistible thrust. Hence in the depths of the self, below this most reasonable pondering over most reasonable pieces of advice, something else was going on—a gradual heating and a sudden boiling over of feelings and ideas, not unperceived, but rather unnoticed." * The ideas we carry out in such action as this are, Bergson says, verily ours, in a sense in which any of reason's ideas as to the best course for us to take could not have been. "If we turn back to them and carefully scrutinize our memory, we shall see that we had ourselves shaped those ideas, ourselves lived those feelings, but that, through some strange reluctance to exercise our will, we had thrust them back into the darkest depths of our soul whenever they came up to the surface. And this is why we seek in vain to explain our sudden change of mind by the visible circumstances which preceded it. We wish to know the reason why we have made up our mind, and we find that we have decided without any reason, and perhaps even against every reason. But, in certain cases, that is the best of reasons. For then the action which has been performed does not express some superficial idea, almost external to ourselves, distinct and easy to account for: it agrees with the whole of our most

* *Time and Free Will*, English translation, p. 129.

intimate feelings, thoughts, and aspirations, with that particular conception of life which is the equivalent of all our past experience; in a word, with our personal idea of happiness and honour. Hence it has been a mistake to look for examples in the ordinary and even indifferent circumstances of life in order to prove that man is capable of choosing without a motive. It might easily be shown that these insignificant actions are bound up with some determining reason. It is at the great and solemn crisis, decisive of our reputation with others, and yet more with ourselves, that we choose in defiance of what is conventionally called a motive, and this absence of any tangible reason is the more striking the deeper our freedom goes." *

No one will doubt the possibility of a situation arising such as Bergson here describes. But, as he admits, it is not at all a universal rule. It is only "in certain cases" that to have no reason for your action is the best of reasons. It is only "in certain cases" that this rebellion against all law and logic is the true freedom of the self. There is always the possibility that it may be quite the reverse, mere passion, the return of the self towards the animal, the negation and undoing of all the characteristic work which man does, and in doing which he has become man.

There can be an arbitrariness of activity

* *Time and Free Will*, English translation, pp. 169–170.

which is only an indirect effort to be passive, and it is possible even in those passages of experience which have all the appearance of being high and heroic. The fact that Bergson can cull illustrations from these experiences does not of itself invalidate the reading we have taken of his principle.

V

But *must* it be applicable? Must intuition always be passive? We reply, yes, always, if its movement be the inverse of the constructive movement of thought.

It may be objected here, however, that we have only spoken about what may be. "These or those apparent heroics *may* indeed be only a dressed-up selfishness or absurdity or passion; but," it may be urged, "this is only a possibility. The opposite is surely also possible. Apparent heroism may, indeed, only be passion. That which looks like achievement may only be the undoing of achievement. But also they may not. If there are occasions when 'to have no reason' is *not* the best of reasons, there are occasions when it is."

Perfectly so: but the question is, are these instances cases of "intuition"? In other words, are they cases of "inverting the habitual direction of the work of thought"? Not, we venture with some confidence to reply, if the whole fabric of language and social life lie *in* that direction, as Bergson himself says.

For, it must be remembered, what we are speaking of now is the rebellion which is

admittedly only a deeper loyalty, that breaking of the letter of the law which is a real and not only a pretended keeping of its spirit. Every rebel is loyal to something. Every self-conscious rebel, if he is honest, thinks he is loyal to humanity. But we are speaking now only of a certain sub-class of the latter, of those rebels of the rarer sort, clear-eyed and broken-hearted, who both thought themselves loyal to humanity in their rebellion and really were so, and who, in all their unwilling transgression of convention and established order, were really continuing the creative process out of which society had arisen. Is that movement an undoing of the movement whereby man has acquired intelligent means of expression and achieved his social life? Is it a movement in the inverse direction? It is not.

And if it is not, it is not an inversion of the movement of thought, but a continuation of the same. We have Bergson's own word for that. For these things themselves, he has told us, are the outcome of the intellect.

For we must recall that according to Bergson there were two possibilities open to the self. It might remain in that state in which all contained in it is fused together, i.e. "as it really is." Or it might diffract itself through thought.* But it will never reach social life without such diffraction through thought. Without distinguishing their experiences, with-

* See chap. VI, section iv.

out thought and language, it is impossible for human beings, he rightly points out, either to deal with the outer world in space or to combine with one another to deal jointly with anything. The discriminating thought which falsifies the human mind is yet, Bergson allows, a necessity for the social life of humanity.

VI

The confusion in Bergson.

Thus does Bergson's way of speaking of his central principle turn quite round. In the course of his treatment of that peculiar perception called intuition, wherein time or duration comes to view—that perception in which it is said we possess reality "integrally"—he passes from the language of relapse to the language of strenuous effort; and by a quite unwonted oversight, the very metaphor (the dream) which once seemed aptly to symbolize the integral apprehension comes to be used to symbolize its direct antithesis.* The circumstance is in no way inexplicable. It simply means that an effort to do nothing or to do harm to man's characteristic achievement may become a very imposing affair without thereby changing its character. A very brave show of diligence or heroism may be inwardly quite negative in character.

* Compare *Time and Free Will*, pp. 126–127, with *Creative Evolution*, p. 212.

The fact is, there are two "intuitions," two "times," two "durations," two "*élans*." One is truly symbolized by idle dreaming, and one has its very antithesis in the dream. Only one of these yields the real truth of the mind and the world; and Bergson confuses them together. There is that movement of the spirit in which distinctions are all melted and lost. And there is that movement wherein they are transcended, but preserved. The one is the animal mind as it has usually been conceived; although Bergson's work ought to go far to teach us to regard it differently. The other is the human mind. The one is the mind which consists at any one moment of but a single impulse in greater or less strength, and whose intensity would be theoretically measurable, as Bergson has abundantly shown human impulses are not. The other is the mind which consists of a plurality of impulses which in their unity are just *not* fused or melted but preserved in their distinctness. The one, consequently, is a mind whose action, being but the satisfaction of this moment's impulse, is always a doing of only one thing at once. The other is a mind whose characteristic action is a doing of many things at a stroke. And with Bergson's more heroic examples the question is always, of which of these two kinds of intuition is this particular case of the uprush of the "deep-seated self" an example? Say it is a rebellion against established moral order. It is not enough to

ask whether all of this particular person's feelings, thoughts, and experiences are set aflame by the decision to rebel; as, e.g. Sorel's myth of the general strike sets the minds aglow of those who "take a very active part in the real revolutionary movement." The glow decides nothing. The question is, of what is the rebellious decision the outcome? Is it the enlightened and solemn and infinitely mournful "I can none other"; or is it a mere kick at the traces? Which of these is its really basal note? Is it towards the single passion or towards the infinite action that its direction honestly lies? If the former, it may still be "intuition," for it is genuinely other than rational in its main drift; but if the latter, the title must be withdrawn. For now it is simply an effort to continue and consolidate the constructive work of thought, an effort really to possess thought's winnings; to carry forward, and not at all to undo, that characteristic movement of the spirit of man which finds expression in thought, language, and human society. When syndicalism determines to throw constructive ideas aside, its sort of intuition far more nearly answers the inner character which Bergson, so far as he has made it distinctive, has given to the thing, than would have been the effort to bring the best thought they could to the service of their action.

CHAPTER X

MEINONG AND RUSSELL

It is now time to knit up the argument whereby we have endeavoured to connect Bergson, through realism, with syndicalistic socialism. We may afterwards turn briefly to another channel through which philosophical realism and syndicalistic socialism are linked with one another.

I

Summary and forecast.

According to our view there is a realistic ingredient in Bergson's philosophy which affiliates it to the spirit out of which the most recent form of socialism has come. He is induced by what is realistic in his work to utter a virtual benediction upon any political policy which bids people go back from action which is rational, towards action which is instinctive and blind. This is precisely what syndicalism needs, to justify its policy.

A latent realism, or devotion to the given—*les données immédiates*—is what gives its peculiar turn to Bergson's reading of the human will. According to that reading, all qualificatory

expressions notwithstanding, man's activity only becomes characteristically human by renouncing that forward movement whereby it goes forth to clothe itself in thought and language and an established order of life, and adopting the opposite movement. Bergson, indeed, in speaking of the process whereby we approach the real, often uses the language of arduous advance; but what he is describing—if it has any affinity with what he first gives us as the true movement towards the real, or if it has any distinctness from the approach by way of thought which he repudiates—does not justify such language. He either does not lead anywhere new, or else his real leading is backwards towards the incalculableness and blindness of the given will. His whole attitude, so far as it is distinctive, prepares him to welcome with an involuntary "well done," any social movement which has effected what we should call the relapse upon the irrational. And this is the character of syndicalism. Syndicalism has taken courage explicitly to relinquish the more comprehensive, constructive, political view of the preceding socialism; and to fall back upon direct action, upon striking straight for the immediate need, upon violence and action for action's sake. The syndicalist who saw clearly how well the whole outlook of Bergson confirmed his practical policy could, as we said, surprise no one if he responded to his teaching with a fervent amen.

But it is the thesis of this book that the same stream which embraces Bergsonism and syndicalism embraces still more. The realism which links the syndicalistic movements to Bergson links them in another way to another stream of recent philosophical thought which it is now time to consider.

II

The link between Russell and syndicalism —the *narrowness* of the given will.

Bergson was linked to the syndicalists by his virtual devotion to the incalculable given will. But there is another side to the given will than its incalculableness. That is its narrowness. And there is another side to syndicalistic socialism than its learning to accept and justify incalculableness. That is its learning to accept and justify narrowness. Now, in its emphasis upon the latter aspect of the given will, lies the secret of the way in which the professed realism of Russell, as distinct from the implicit realism of Bergson, agrees with syndicalism and helps it forward.

III

What has narrowed socialism?

That the tendency of the new socialism has been towards accepting and seeking to justify, not only incalculableness of action, but also a certain narrowness, is a view the

truth of which, after what has been indicated in our opening chapters, should be fairly plain.

Casting the eye back over the history of the movement, and contrasting the latest socialism with the preceding forms, there would, in fact, seem to be very little mystery about either of the two following circumstances: (*a*) that the socialistic activities of two or three generations ago should have learnt to shape themselves into the sort of socialism that stands before us to-day as political or "parliamentary"; or (*b*) that the latter should have acquired so many doubts about itself and should have become the object of so much extraneous criticism from both above and below as it has to-day. These facts are straws which show how a very deep tide was running. Let us consider them in their order.

It had at one time the wide aim of reforming society from the centre out.

(*a*) Given the sort of ideas from which socialism first sprang, the getting of men into the legislature who were duly inspired by socialistic ideals was bound to come to appear the obvious method of bringing the general socialistic ideal nearer to realization.

It is quite true that the full rôle of the legislature did not occur all at once to the minds of socialists. There was a kind of knight-errantry about the earliest socialism which filled the heads of its votaries with individual schemes into which the idea of employing the existing State machinery did not largely enter. But it was in the nature of the

case that a change should come. Owen, for example, was fated to discover by the failure of his experiments that man could not profit by the socialist regime till he was ready for it. Man's actual state was the real problem. His transition to the ideal must be just as fast as the whole of society as a body can move along with him. At what point, then, could a reformer best hope to move the whole of society? Surely by acting at its centre, by sending the right men into the legislature.

The double lesson, that of trying to emancipate, not isolated little communities, but the whole State, and that of trying to move it, not all at a rush, but gradually, could hardly be unlearnt, even by what was revolutionary and catastrophic in the subsequent teaching of Marx and Engels.

That the main force of these two teachers went towards giving a very sensible impetus to the catastrophic view cannot be denied. When Marx passed the prophetic word that socialism was no dream, but was coming; that evolution itself had the matter in hand; that capitalism by the laws of its nature was drifting towards its Niagara, and that the workers of the world needed but to unite and push it over; the new energy communicated to socialistic thinking was greater than any it had ever known. Yet the revolutionary side of it did not gain undisputed possession of the field. The very obviousness of the evils to be remedied, the very

plainness of the remedies, seemed to suggest a more excellent way. The ease with which ameliorative measures could be imagined, and the resemblance of the practical measures which promised the most immediate relief, to socialistic measures, pointed to an easier solution of the social problem than through a revolution. Particularly in England, socialism was associated with enlightened common sense. There, confronting daily observation, plain for any man to see, was the enormous mass of good things got out of the earth by men's labour. There, on the other hand, was the preposterous inequality of distribution. To effect a removal of these absurdities all at once was much too big a task. But the task was of such a nature that it seemed possible to accomplish it piecemeal. Gradually, the instruments which the country contains for making the earth yield her fruits and her treasure could be made to devolve into the hands of the inhabitants in their corporate capacity, i.e. into the hands of the State. And the obvious way towards the realization of such a plan was to get representatives of the proletariat into Parliament, pledged to support every measure which promised to bring the ideal nearer. And there were plenty of measures, actual and possible, which had the appearance of doing this. Hence the growth of parliamentary socialism characteristic of the past two generations.

(*b*) What is the nature of the cloud of mistrust which has arisen to overshadow this general scheme, and to turn many of the most eager of the recent advocates of socialism, as we have seen, towards direct action and economic salvation? Again, it is no mystery. Results of the other scheme simply have not come up to expectations. Many reasons might be adduced. The basal one appears to be that the process has found itself caught in the toils of a vicious circle. Labour Members have been pushed into Parliament, have supported or originated measures of socialistic tendency, promoted State regulation of industry in the workers' interests, and State relief for the workers' burdens, and all the rest, without apparently coming any nearer either to being rid of capitalism or to making a real difference in the workers' position. This has begun to seem as though it were a necessity inherent in the nature of the pacific solution. If a State or municipality will not rob; if it pays a man money for the railroad or tramway system or waterworks which he owns, the situation as regards capitalism does not alter. The man is as rich as ever, remains in the place of power, can turn and buy up something else, is able still to divert to his own use an enormous share of the good things produced by human labour. He cannot be bought out. In Mr. Hilaire Belloc's blunt words, "If you are going to confiscate, you must confiscate." And pro-

But working from the centre has for various reasons proved slow and futile.

tective legislation for the workman is caught in the same circle. The compensation which the shipbuilder has to pay the injured workman is taken out at last in the price of the workman's tea which the ships must bring to him. The cost of the Factory Acts goes on to the price of the flannels.

IV

And there was a temptation to work harder another instrument which by its nature aims at less, but had proved more effective.

There has resulted from this entirely comprehensible sense of disappointment with the fruits of the labours of those who have wrought for the peaceful evolution of the socialist State, a change of ideal, a turning towards something else than had hitherto filled the horizon of the socialistic thinker; and the character of the new ideal is that it is something narrower and nearer. Advanced social movements are beginning to accept, and so implicitly to justify, not merely incalculableness, but also a certain narrowness.

From the beginning two instruments awaited those who wanted to effect a social change in the workers' interests. The workers might be got to agitate for power to send men of their own to speak in Parliament; or they might strike. Of the two weapons, the former, if it could have been made to work, would have done the bigger thing. The latter aims at less, but accomplishes more. Of the two,

the strike weapon has proved itself the more capable of great extension and great immediate effect. What we are here calling a change of ideal has consisted partly in the vague, half-conscious, general feeling on the part of the workers that their power in the way of strikes was not nearly exhausted, and that their parliamentary ambitions were, on the whole, rather a futile affair, tending to make their leaders lose their class-sense rather than to have any other obvious effect. This diffused feeling of having exhausted their strength in one direction, and of not being nearly at the end of their strength in another, has tended to shape itself into a quite definite change of outlook. Socialism in its more advanced forms is turning from its preoccupation with the consumer to take a new interest in the producer. It has discovered, quite rightly, that in the past the consumer has been the focus of interest; and it will begin to think more, now, of the other party.

What is the inwardness of this change? It would seem to be of the nature just indicated. The reforming spirit is content to be narrow, attempting less for the sake of accomplishing more.

Ever since the latter part of the eighteenth century industry has been growing more organized. The questions, Whose shall be the fruits? and Who shall arrange the producing of them? have been questions ever since the

organization itself began to be. From the beginning there were the three possible claimants: the proprietors of the factories, the people who work in them and make the goods, and, thirdly, the people who buy and use the goods. Now, of course, every one uses goods. We are all consumers. In taking the consumers' point of view, therefore, the older reformers took the whole community into their focus of vision. In this sense they aimed high. They attempted much. They would reform human life as Livingstone would evangelize Africa, from the centre out. They sought the remedy which would bring the wider benefit. They would make the State the owner, and also make the State the people. The watchword in effect was "Nationalize, and leave the democracy power over its own officers." We have seen, however, how slowly the plan works and how vexatiously. It was inevitable, in so far as the desire lived and another unexhausted instrument for fulfilling it lay to hand, that attention should begin to be directed towards another centre of interest and another ideal. And the nature of it is too plain to escape observation. "Why persevere," the subconscious thought seems to be, "trying to secure the equitable distribution of goods and services among all consumers? We are coming no nearer our goal. Going round by way of the legislature and the State, we are trying to fetch too wide a compass. Even if we do keep

an eye, still, upon this more distant object, why not turn our attention meanwhile to the things more immediately within our grasp, and as members of this or that industry, strike for that higher life to ourselves, which earlier ambitions would fain have brought to the whole community? Let us strike, not for higher wages merely; that way lies failure; we pay it all out again in prices; but for the control of the industries we work, so that we may fix our conditions of labour, and exact from the rest of the nation here and now the kind of life we want. Instead of merely sending speakers to Parliament to persuade the whole people to come along with us to some, perhaps, self-contradictory goal, to which the whole people cannot be brought, why should not *we*, at any rate, simply take to our own feet and walk to our goal ourselves?" Such is the unspoken language. The instrument is the strike, the goal is the autonomy, not of the community, but of an industry; and an industry's good is something less than the community's, something narrower and nearer.

V

Now this is the movement which Mr. Russell's realism—*his* fondness for the given—has taken in mid-flight and helped on its way. He says that he thinks he sympathizes with the

The realist temper, which favours this narrowness: Where it was

first exhibited in Russell's case.

syndicalists. Upon that surmise our comment will have to be that at any rate his whole mode of thought does. It is a far cry from the field of political and social activity to the sphere of Mr. Russell's earliest labours, the sphere in which he made his name and first showed his genius as a thinker. Yet it will repay us to examine somewhat closely the nature of his achievement in the earlier field. For what was toward and what he did, in that sphere, is by no means unrelated to what was toward and what he did, in the field of social theory.

VI

What Russell did in mathematics.

Mr. Russell, as is well known, first appeared before the world as a mathematician. Perhaps his most convincing title to fame lies in the part he has taken in the great modern enterprise of reducing mathematics to logic. It is not without significance for understanding the temper of present intellectual culture, that such an enterprise as this should have been in the way of being undertaken. It is of the nature of an attempt to reduce the number of mathematical principles. Its being entered upon at all bespeaks intellectual dissatisfaction of a certain kind. It means that mathematical reasoning has ceased to appear sufficiently convincing. People can scent possibilities which

the traditional mathematical principles have not reckoned with. The latter can be upset. Conditions can be imagined or construed under which, for example, the so-called axiom of parallels would not hold. And so, to everything having a claim to be reckoned a mathematical first principle, the call has gone forth that it shall learn to abide by what is perfectly and utterly self-evident, and not state too much and not overlap the statement of any other principle. The new enterprise is not one of relating mathematics upwards towards anything more concrete; it is of the nature of reducing it downwards, into something still more obvious and intellectually compelling even than it was. To put the matter in another way, it had been enough, hitherto, that mathematics should be as plain as that two and two are four or that parallels never meet. Now, it must be a great deal plainer. The principles on which even these statements rest have to be elucidated.

The whole enterprise is interesting, because it shows us the spirit which seeks for the "just-given" already in full cry. Reason as it is "given" is undoubtedly to be met with here, in the field of formal ratiocination. Reason in its first and most obvious expression is the thing which says that two and two are four. The motive for seizing it in this, the extreme limit of its elementary exercise, is that thereby it can be shown, from one side, how the mathematical edifice is held together; we are enabled

hereby to put our finger, at any point, upon the cement which secures the mathematical structure, or rather, upon the very binding hairs within the cement. Whether or not this was an advantageous point from which to start out upon the general problems of life and mind will appear. In any case, this is the enterprise in which Russell first made his mark. To repeat it, he made his mark as a reducer of the obviousness of mathematics to something more obvious still. And he advances from mathematics, through logic, to the general problems of philosophy. In his excursus upon the problems of social life he appears, *prima facie*, to have gone off rather at a tangent to what was his former beat. But we shall probably find, despite such appearances, that it is the same man with the same logic who is working in both places.

His point of departure in general philosophy.

The important matter for us with regard to Russell, and, we may add, the difficult matter, is simply to apprehend his mental whereabouts, to say to ourselves what time of day it actually is, with him. We must try to apprehend his mind's point of incidence upon current culture, the place where his thought impinges upon the general thought of the time. This is revealed best in his starting-point just described. Our best way will be to distinguish his point of departure, on the one hand from Bergson's, which is quite different, and on the other

hand from that of a German thinker with whom he claims to have a great deal in common —A. Meinong.

VII

As contrasted with Bergson, he begins from the *externally*-given.

The fact that Bergson is an idealist by intention while Russell is by intention a realist prepares us to find a greater difference between them than there really is. But although our endeavour until now has been to correct this error, and draw out the likeness between the two, still, the difference remains a genuine one. It arises from the fact that while there is in both the realistic predilection for the immediate or given, they seek their immediate in different places. Bergson begins with what is immediately given *in* consciousness. Russell begins with what is immediately given *to* it.

Bergson's whole type of results unsatisfactory to him.

We met Bergson's earliest mature thought in the heat of the combat with the psychophysicists. He makes his debut in philosophy in the rôle of a disputer of the allegation that states of consciousness are measurable. It was thus almost incidental to his occupation that he should attain to a very intimate acquaintance with *les données immédiates de la conscience*. In what is thus immediately given *in* consciousness he finds his clue to the general nature of things; and, incidentally, finds his way to a general nature of things which

conveys no satisfaction to the mind of Russell at all; one can easily see why.

"There is no room in this philosophy," says Russell, "for the moment of contemplative insight." "The good which Bergson hopes to see realized in the world is action." All pure contemplation he calls "dreaming"; and he condemns it "by a whole series of uncomplimentary epithets." "Those who desire some prevision of the end which action is to achieve are told that an end foreseen would be nothing new." "Those to whom activity without purpose seems a sufficient good," he says again, "will find in Bergson's books a pleasing picture of the universe. But those to whom action, if it is to be of any value must be inspired by some vision, by some imaginative foreshadowing of a world less painful, less unjust, less full of strife than the world of our everyday life, those, in a word, whose action is built on contemplation, will find in this philosophy nothing of what they seek, and will not regret that there is no reason to think it true."

There is thus between Russell and Bergson all the difference between contemplation and action. Russell seeks the stable object, Bergson seeks the flowing. But this is only because, while both seek the given, the one seeks it primarily in the psychical, the other primarily in the physical realm. As obviously as for Bergson the beginning of all knowledge is the true apprehension of your own inner life

with its intensely unified diversity, so obviously for Russell does the beginning of all knowledge lie in the immediate perception of a single hard datum, an external object.

VIII

His devotion to the kind of knowledge typified in the immediate apprehension of an externally given is what interests us in Russell. It gives to the entire cast of his thought a character which distinguishes it even from writers who, generally speaking, stand much nearer to him than Bergson does. We refer here especially to Meinong.

But Russell is still not the same in his outlook as Meinong, who *also* finds his type of knowledge in the externally-given.

Both Meinong and Russell are outstanding examples of the prevalent contemporary desire to free the subject-matter of philosophy from 11 entanglement with the inner life. They are equally in quest of the indefeasibly objective. Underlying all differences, their common question is: "All confusedness of subjectivity apart, what is genuinely out there?" In Meinong's language, "What is *Gegenstand*?" But there is this difference: that they shout their question from different ends of the field. Meinong lifts up his voice amid the psychologists. Russell speaks as a physicist and mathematician. The result is that amid much community of interest a profound difference of spirit exists.

The affinity of Meinong and Russell.

It is noteworthy that the community of interest is so great that it has even appeared great to the thinkers themselves. Russell prefaced an account he was giving of Meinong's principles in the pages of *Mind* in 1904, with the statement that his exposition would serve the double purpose of expounding Meinong's opinions and advocating his own; the points of agreement being "so numerous and important" that the two aims could be easily combined. Yet there is no fear of the two ever really agreeing, nor have they any right to agree.

The difference of principle between them does indeed seem sufficiently slight. They are engaged upon the problem of the trans-subjective, the problem of *Gegenständlichkeit*—in plain English, the question of outness. They both ask, "What is genuinely out and over against us, as, for example, an object of external perception appears at first sight to be?" At first it seems as though any difference between them must be merely verbal. The point of departure in both cases being perception, Russell merely declares that the perceptible extends far beyond the sphere of actually existing things, while Meinong appears to prefer to say that far more is objective (far more is really *out*) than is perceptible.

We are familiar with the objects in space and time, the sticks and stones about our feet; they, for Meinong, are out. Beyond these,

though, are objects which he calls "objects of higher order"; and they too are out. There are, moreover, floating objects, "homeless objects"; they also are out. Altogether, much more is out, for Meinong, than is perceptible. All of this seems to be capable of being equally well said by adopting the phraseology of Russell and declaring that perception can reveal much more than the sticks and stones.

The difference between them.

Yet, as just stated, there is little chance of the two ever agreeing. Russell suspects Meinong of sophistication. A great many of his "objects" seem to Russell to have no being or *Gegenständlichkeit* whatsoever. And not without reason. The call of the objective reaches both, but it comes home to them quite differently, owing to the quarter of the field wherein they respectively found themselves when they began to be conscious of what one might call the entanglements of subjectivity.

The call for objectivity is to each a demand of the material with which he is working. But in their different circumstances, it becomes the voice of a differently shaded need. Meinong is immersed in the characteristic problems of modern psychology and a close student of Hume. Russell is in mathematics and physics. Russell's object-matter is bodies, the external, the spatial and temporal; Meinong's is the life of man's mind. In consequence, the intimately felt necessity to Russell is that the object-matter should be unequivocally outer.

To Meinong it is rather that it should not be wholly inner. Meinong has come to a point where he cannot do with the unqualified innerness of the mind. Russell has come to a point where he cannot do with the merely qualified outerness of the object. While Meinong's effort is to get an objectivity into the mind, Russell's is an effort to get subjectivity dismissed from the object. Meinong thus makes the venture, in his field, of asking, "Is not something, here, out?" Russell's venture, in his field, is rather, "I do not believe that anything here is in."

We end not so much with a mere verbal difference between the two thinkers as with a mere verbal agreement. Meinong, confronted with all the higher manifestations of mind —the ideal constructions of reason and its sense of values—and smitten with a sense of the impossibility of regarding all these as a mere set of passing psychic events flitting across the stage of an individual mind, and perfectly willing to admit withal that the objects of these higher attitudes of mind are quite beyond the reach of perception, makes the declaration: "Much more is *Gegenständlich* than is perceptible." And dead against that, Russell's voice is that of some modern Mr. Implacable saying, "No sophistication! *Nothing is Gegenständlich but what is perceptible.*"

Their common principle and its

What is common to both, however, is their love of what is given-as-out, the gratuitous

raid they make upon the naïve mind in its frank trustful intercourse with a largely subjectivized world whose objectivity it yet does not doubt, their hardening down the whole principle of that intercourse into the most elementary shape it will take, and then driving that form of common-sense principle right through the universe. Meinong's case corresponds entirely with what the considerations adduced in previous chapters would lead us to expect. We have an heroic attempt to take objects of higher order, although they are not perceptible, to be as unequivocally out, as if they were objects of perception to common sense; or rather as if they were objects to an ultra-hardened species of common-sense theory. The result is that we soon have the universe peopled with a crowd of most impossible *Gegenstände*, against which Mr. Russell himself, in the name of the common sense which they both profess to respect, is moved to enter a protest.

committal of both to what we have called the nemesis of realism.

Meinong's case.

Yet, on the other hand, if Mr. Russell's own picture of the world escapes the sort of distortion to which Meinong's is subject; if, indeed, he makes it his chief complaint against Meinong that some of his *Gegenstände* are outrageous and tries to set it right; his still following the same principle leads him to contort the universe in another way. He does not restore the mangled world of "objects of higher order" to rationality. He rather lops off the unsightly

Russell's case.

thing and leaves a torso, which he then adorns with a periphery of "possibilities," upon which the mind is free to find interest in drawing. The main value of philosophy, to Mr. Russell, appears to be not to determine what certainly is, but how many things possibly may be. Both thinkers alike pursue the principle of accepting the given, one to the distortion of the world, the other to an emptying of it which amounts to distortion.

Now the same principle resulting in the same kind of general effect is visible when Mr. Russell, with a mind thus trained, turns to the field of politics, expresses his findings, and—partly to his own surprise—finds himself offering the syndicalists the very light they are seeking.

CHAPTER XI

THE REALIST IN POLITICS

How Mr. Russell's realistic tendencies land him near the syndicalists when he turns to social theory.

WE have seen how, along with their tendency to accept and justify incalculableness in action, syndicalistic social movements have exhibited a tendency to accept and justify a certain narrowness. It is on this side of them, we said, that Mr. Russell's realism meets and helps them forward. In the present chapter we have to see how Mr. Russell's realism operates in the sphere of social theory, that it should take this kind of effect.

I

Russell constructive even in his iconoclasm.

Let us endeavour to be clear in the first place as to what we ought to expect. If the principle we have followed throughout these chapters has any truth, then realism is by its nature a breaker-up of the constructive rational order. With its strong sense of what is just-there, it is, as regards the order beyond, insensible of it, ruthless towards it, iconoclastic.

Or what is the same thing from another side—its determination, so far as it constructs, to construct in the name of the given, leaves all such construction as it attempts artificial, one-sided, forced.

Now, if absence of construction (or presence of forced construction) be what realism introduces into the order of thought, we should expect to find it introduce the same into the social order. For the two are not disconnected. As Bergson says, it is the one activity of the human spirit which evolves thought and language and social life. The social order is simply an extension of the world of thought. We should therefore expect to find a realist's work in the one sphere, in some way an extension of his work in the other. Moreover, with a realist of Russell's type, there is this additional source of interest, that he is more or less committed to the attempt to reconstruct, however artificially. For the static, the object of contemplation, is what has the fascination for him. He must have some "prevision of the end." Whatever in the social order, therefore, his devotion to the given may lead him to break up, the question "to what end" must be faced. Even if he should conclude that all is, as far as possible, to be left as it is given; still, some sort of a system must be attempted. This is conveyed by the very title of the work

of his which we are now to examine, *Principles of Social Reconstruction*." *

II

Mr. Russell's criticism of present social institutions: the State and property.

We may begin by indicating the scope and general purport of Mr. Russell's book. Its main intention is to suggest a radical overhaul of our present social institutions, such institutions as the State, property, education, marriage, and religion. His general contention is that none of these, as they exist at present, are even approximately satisfactory. The State has too much power. In fact, the excessive power of the State, partly through internal oppression, but principally through war and the fear of war, "is one of the chief causes of misery in the modern world and one of the main reasons which prevents men from growing to their full mental stature." † It should deprive itself of this power. It should cease to require the unmeasured degree of allegiance which it now requires of individuals. A man's latent feeling for social solidarity, his obscure desire to be one with his tribe, is the chief source of his giving up all for the State; ‡ although his fear of general lawlessness and his fear of foreign invasion contribute their part, as do also religion and patriotism.§ But people

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, by Bertrand Russell (George Allen and Unwin, 1916).

† *Ibid.*, p. 65. ‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53. § *Ibid.*, p. 55.

do not see what evil has been wrought by all this patriotism and religion and feeling for one's kind.* They do not see what it has violated. Apart from war, with all its attendant evils, there is the sense of individual helplessness. Your State has aims which you do not approve, and you cannot make it adopt your aims unless you be a man of very rare gifts.† And a section of the State cannot decide to secede without being called treasonable. And these evils are inevitable because of the necessity the State is constantly under of remaining powerful.

The chief remedy is that the State should strike in upon the path which appears to Mr. Russell the true path of development for a free democracy, the path by following which the individual allegiance to the State would be exchanged for an allegiance to something smaller, something narrower and nearer to himself.

A democracy should gradually turn itself into something less like an *imperium* and more like a collection of little *imperia in imperio*. There should be more opportunity for associations within it, of people who have "certain interests or desires in common." The aim should be to "multiply opportunities of intercourse" and to give "the greatest possible share of initiative to each individual,[12] and the reason given is that "if this be not done there will be a general sense of impotence and dis-

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 59. † *Ibid.*, p. 60.

couragement." There is no other way of securing that people shall be politically active. "In view of the vastness of the State most men can find little political outlet for initiative except in subordinate organizations framed for specific purposes." *

His sense of the need for smaller organizations by joining which the individual may get freedom and scope for himself has the effect, as might have been expected, of bringing Mr. Russell round to the side of the syndicalists when he comes to discuss the institution of property. He gets to the heart of the question by surveying the ancient evil, love of money, and asking what we are to do about it. On what principle ought we to make our money, or, in other words, create wealth or bring goods out of the earth? It is not to be on the capitalist principle of simply producing as much as possible, nor on the socialist principle of produce-and-divide, nor yet on the purely syndicalist principle of producing in such a way as to secure the welfare of the producers. The thing to aim at, really, is the keeping up to as high a pitch as possible the vitality and initiative of the individual. Mr. Russell advises the Labour movement to try to strike into this path. It should aim at giving individuals more opportunity, not merely more money, i.e. security and protection. It must aim at liberating private affections, giving scope to

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 71, f.

creative impulses, leaving full opportunity to whatever is instinctive in the constitution of man to grow and flourish.

The note struck with regard to the other institutions treated is somewhat similar. In education the author advocates less of the authoritative shaping of children's beliefs and more encouragement of originality of thought and the love of mental adventure. In regard to marriage there is to be less interference with the private relations of men and women. And amongst the churches "the first and greatest change that is required is to establish a morality of hope rather than fear, of things to be done rather than of things to be left undone." As for war, it should be abolished, and with it would go the necessity of preparing for it, the big ugly external necessity which constantly controls and oppresses States, prevents their inhabitants from taking their liberty, and demands, willy-nilly, that they rank up and agree and be ready to fight together.

III

The principle underlying his criticism; that the vitality of the individual must be preserved and cultivated. This,

It would have been easy for us with this indication of the purport of Mr. Russell's book before us, to have elicited the realism, in the sense in which we have been using the term, from Mr. Russell's concrete proposals and traced its operation. But he himself has set

forth the principle underlying these proposals in terms so clear as to make the feature which we have been seeing in realistic thought generally, quite unmistakable. One of the attractions, in fact, of Mr. Russell's writing is that, with a mind so concrete as his is, he yet does not fail to go into fundamentals. It is, of course, a necessity of the situation. No one who is going to deal with moral, social, and political subjects thoroughly will be able for long to escape the old question, What is the chief end of man? The moment questions are raised as to how much or how little State control, State organization, and what not is *really necessary*, the other question is not far away:—necessary what for? Mr. Russell places his answer to this in the forefront of his discussion.

It is the business of social institutions to do.

Every person who is normally constituted has a central principle of his personality. It has two elements in it, impulse and desire—blind impulse and clearly conscious desire. It requires, of course, the satisfaction of both, but of the two sides the impulsive is the really important one, despite the fact that "political philosophy hitherto has been almost entirely based upon *desire* as the source of human actions." "The part played by desire has always been fully recognized," he says. But in truth "desire governs no more than a part of our human activity, and that not the most important, but only the more conscious, explicit,

and civilized part." * Again, "In all the more instinctive part of our nature we are dominated by impulses to certain kinds of activity, not by desires for certain ends. Children run and shout, not because of any good they expect to realize, but because of a direct impulse to running and shouting." † And grown men are much the same. To sum up: "Impulse is at the basis of our activity much more than desire. Desire has its place, but not so large a place as it seems to have. Impulses bring with them a whole train of subservient fictitious desires; they make men feel that they desire the results which will follow from indulging the impulses, and that they are acting for the sake of these results, when in fact their action has no motive outside itself. A man may write a book or paint a picture under the belief that he desires the praise which it will bring him; but as soon as it is finished, if his creative impulse is not exhausted, what he has done grows uninteresting to him, and he begins a new piece of work. What applies to artistic creation applies to all that is most vital in our lives: direct impulse is what moves us, and the desires we think we have are a mere garment for the impulse." ‡

Here we have the principle underlying the proposals sketched above. Institutions are condemned because they are not doing their

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, pp. 12, 13.
† *Ibid.*, p. 13. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

work. Their work would seem to be to give what is central in man, its scope; and so far the statement would be hard to gainsay. But what is central is the instinctive as distinguished from the rational side of his nature. The matter of paramount importance for a true social policy would thus seem to be that in all social arrangements scope be given to the individual mind's initiative, its vitality and energy, its whole impulsive life. This is what we are to save. What we are to save it from is the deadly pressure of the specified modern institutions. The trouble is that such institutions in practice oppress instead of liberating this central energy of the soul of man.

IV

Plato has a wise remark somewhere about the type of character which is actuated by "love of honour," the type of man who, if he cannot command an army, will at least lead a company, and who, if he cannot do that, must at any rate by hook or crook be at the head of something. In all Mr. Russell's suggestions for social reforms it is hard to avoid the impression that this is the spirit which he is catering for. He seems to sympathize with this type of mind more, almost, than he quite knows. At any rate such a view seems to press itself upon the reader more insistently with every page he

Fallacy: he takes what is only the most obvious manifestation of the life of a living soul to be the essence of its life.

turns. Here apparently we have a writer who feels that he has great things to say. He wants the State to listen. He finds it irresponsive—not simply accidentally preoccupied, engrossed for the moment in other business (he is writing in 1916), but by its very nature too big, too dull, and too gross to be really accessible, to his fine appeals. He writes like one who, having had all this bitter experience, had made up his mind that he would even go to, and draw up a picture of an ideal State; and in it, if nowhere else, will provide for the thousands like himself who, he is sure, exist. And his provision for them consists in this, that he will furnish companies for them to command if they may not have armies. He will provide associations where the individual may have a chance to make himself heard; and characteristically he lays it down that they shall not be the tame, briefless, child's-play associations that we have at present, clubs, churches, businesses, etc. They shall be given real political functions to perform; so that it shall be something to belong to one's trade union or to any association in whose policies one has a voice, it being a recognized part of the government of the country.

It is too clear to need pointing out, how in all this enthusiasm for the autonomy of the individual, and in all this construing of the individual as an impulsive rather than a rational being, Mr. Russell is taking the old

realistic line: What a thing is, is what it is given as. He is not peculiar in the end he is pursuing. He is not peculiar in making the end of social improvement the creation of the conditions of "vitality" or "life" for the human soul, or in advocating the maintenance of these conditions in human society. What is distinctive is the degree to which he regards that which such vitality is given as, to be what it really is. He is peculiar in the degree to which, in determining what a living soul is, he is enslaved by first impressions.

For no doubt that which he takes to be *the* characteristic of a living soul, its vitality, its energy, its initiative and originality, its ability to be itself and no one else, its claim to live its own life without interference, in one word, all its self-contained exclusiveness, does indeed characterize such a soul. It is, moreover, the first thing we see in it when we look straight at it. A great man *is* one who thinks his own thoughts and goes his own way, one who cannot easily be thwarted or defeated; and as this is the first thing one sees about him, so it is the thing which anybody may see. It needs no insight to see it. But more goes to the making of him than this obvious characteristic. You will not make a great man out of a small one by simply giving him the liberty to think as he pleases and act as he likes and by abstaining from ever thwarting him. Character is only indicated by this kind of liberty, it is not

constituted by it. All that comes to light here is the fighting spear-point of the soul, not the soul itself. And the suspicion that the soul itself demands for its development far other conditions than Mr. Russell's proposals provide will probably be found to grow upon us as we examine these proposals further. But this examination we must reserve for the next chapter.

Meanwhile, we would simply remind the reader of the manner in which we have found in Bergson a strenuousness of inactivity, in syndicalism a discipline of indiscipline, and in theoretical realism a gigantic alteration of the universe for the sake of not altering but preserving as they are given some central things in it. These are the symptoms of the fact that anti-construction is inverse construction. And we must expect to find the same effect from devotion to the given will in society as from devotion to the given fact in the region of theoretical philosophy.

CHAPTER XII

MR. RUSSELL ON EDUCATION, MARRIAGE, AND RELIGION

Mr. Russell's social principle in further applications.

WE have just indicated the drift of Mr. Russell's criticism of certain institutions, and discussed the principle underlying his criticism of others. What we found defective in the principle was precisely the defect we found common to him and Bergson, the realistic tendency to take central things at their immediate face value. The full consequences of this misapprehension, however, do not appear in the discussions we have so far considered, those upon the state and upon property. They are much more evident in the discussion which Russell gives of the institutions of education, marriage, and religion, which we now go on to consider.

I

His plea for individual freedom in education.

In the case of education, as in that of most other social institutions, Mr. Russell is clear that the straightforward application of the old watchwords of socialism is not desirable. Mere

demands for justice and liberty do not carry us far in the educational sphere. It is not permissible to take as our guiding ideas here, the mottoes "Justice for the children," "Liberty for the children." Here if nowhere else there must be authority. Children cannot be made responsible to themselves alone. But the author has great sympathy with aspirations in this direction. The children must be as free as possible. The whole question is how to constitute the authority in such a way that it will act beneficially. Mr. Russell, with a freshness of statement which makes us listen again to what we have heard so often before, proffers this suggestion: that for true education the teacher must reverence the child he teaches. His mood must be one of respect for the child's own mind. He must be jealous not to give it any sort of warp. There are things, of course, into which the children have to be compelled. They must be made to tell the truth, for instance, and practise common honesty. But there must not be added to this indispensable compulsion that other sort now customary, the compulsion which gives their minds an inner warp, the kind of compulsion involved, e.g. in teaching them history which magnifies their own country at the expense of truth. There ought to be neutral textbooks in history; and in the same way, we gather, there ought to be neutral teaching in religion. The children ought not to grow up ignorant of

the fact that there are many creeds, and that none of them is quite certain. Education should not be designed to produce belief, but rather thought. It should not impart positive opinions to the young, but rather teach them the doubtfulness of all that is doubtful. It is not its business to "mould" the mind. It should foster the wish for truth, not the conviction that this or that is the truth. The other way is only a way of making minds cohere in a fighting organization; and that, at best, is not a great ideal. Sparta, as the author reminds us, beat Athens at fighting, but it is Athens we remember. Our aim must always be to keep alive the minds of the children. We must keep them alert. We must not teach them acquiescence in the wisdom of authority. That wrecks their powers of independent thought, and leaves them slaves to churches, governments, political parties, etc. We must encourage their critical faculty. We ought to have more discussion, more encouragement to the children to express themselves, more mental adventure. Except we initiate some such policy we shall not have "the minimum of progress in the nation which is indispensable." *

Mr. Russell, like many another radical, has been regarded by some as a man ahead of his time. Certainly a great deal in this is ahead of the Victorian era—its plea for more discus-

* See *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, pp. 148–167.

sion in the schools, more questioning, more criticism. But is there not something or other in the constitution of the human soul which Mr. Russell is forgetting? We shall find that in his later chapters he evinces a consciousness of other things in the make-up of the free mind than its obvious explosive force.* But up till now at least, the author speaks of activity, vigour, initiative, energy; of all the things which strike you at once when you happen to come up with a mind really alive, at a really lively passage. Is it not clear that the writer is obsessed with the first crude impression of what a living soul is? Whatever the language employed, we cannot avoid the impression that the soul, for him, is something repressed which must be let explode. And as we pursue him through the next of his discussions, his treatment of "Marriage and the population question," there gains upon us rapidly the double conviction (*a*) that the opportunity simply to explode its reserves is not enough for the soul, and (*b*) that this is all that Mr. Russell effectively feels the need for.

II

His views respecting the lack of freedom to which people are con-

It is in his discussion of the institution of marriage that the author makes the most arresting of all his proposals for reform. The

* See *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, pp. 233 ff.

theme which occupies him here is not, he frankly says, "morality." It is the general effect of the marriage laws and public opinion and practice upon (*a*) the propagation and upbringing of children, and (*b*) the happiness of married people. He comes to the same conclusion from both points of view. What seems to him to be called for is (1) for parents who are healthy, a measure to ensure complete relief from the economic burdens incurred by having children, and (2) as regards conduct, "as much freedom in the law as is compatible with knowledge of paternity."

demned, under present law and conventions relating to family life; and respecting its results.

The author's proposal to relax the restrictions which at present govern the marriage relationship is much the most drastic of all his suggestions. The reasons alleged for it are chiefly that the present state of the law and of public opinion penalizes honesty, encourages clandestine practice, and places a restriction on the number of children who would otherwise be born. "The law in England is based upon the expectation that the great majority of marriages will be lifelong. A marriage can only be dissolved if either the wife or the husband, but not both, can be proved to have committed adultery. . . . Even when these conditions are fulfilled, in practice only the well-to-do can be divorced, because the expense is very great." This system, he continues, "rests, broadly speaking, upon four propositions: (1) that sexual intercourse outside

marriage is sin; (2) that resentment of adultery by the 'innocent' party is a righteous horror of wrongdoing; (3) that this resentment, but nothing else, may be rightly regarded as making common life impossible; (4) that the poor have no right to fine feelings." The penalty for infringing the marriage law is partly financial, but depends mainly upon public opinion. This public opinion is kept up, through their influence upon the legislature, by that "rather small portion of the public" which "genuinely believes that sexual relations outside marriage are wicked." Those who believe this "are naturally kept in ignorance" of how the otherwise constituted portion of mankind think. But this section of the public, though said to be small, is also said to have so much influence on elections that it can control "the professions of the politicians"; and is alleged to be able to control the votes of the House of Lords "through the presence of the bishops." The result of this state of things is a widespread but very flimsy hypocrisy which allows many infractions of the code, and forbids only those which become public. "A man may not live openly with a woman who is not his wife, an unmarried woman may not have a child, and neither man nor woman may get into the divorce court. Subject to these restrictions there is in practice a very great freedom. It is this practical freedom which makes the state of the law seem tolerable" to

those who do not agree with its principles. "What has to be sacrificed to the holders of strict views is not pleasure, but only children and a common life and truth and honesty."

While the birth of children is thus prevented where it might otherwise take place, it is also being prevented within the sphere of marriage itself, not only by the expense of rearing and educating children, but also by another motive, more purely modern. "Women are acquiring freedom—not merely outward and formal freedom, but inward freedom, enabling them to think and feel genuinely, not according to received maxims." This tends to limit children; and the tendency is reckoned, by Mr. Russell, among the inevitabilities of modern life. It is about to increase. "To the men who have prated confidently of women's natural instincts, the result would be surprising if they were aware of it. Very large numbers of women, when they are sufficiently free to think for themselves, do not desire to have children . . . there are women who are intelligent and active-minded who resent the slavery to the body which is involved . . . ambitious women who desire a career . . . women who love pleasure and gaiety . . . women who love the admiration of men. All these classes . . . are becoming rapidly more numerous, and it may be safely assumed that their numbers will continue to increase for many years to come."

The result of all this is not merely that the

population is tending to become stationary—in itself no great evil—but its best elements are declining and its worst increasing; and the only prospect of relief is a poor one. The Catholics, because of the biological advantage derived by them from their religious tenets on the subject, may—even under present marriage conventions—go on to rear a race "which will be impervious to all the assaults of reason, and will believe imperturbably that limitation of families leads to Hell-fire." This prospect, in Mr. Russell's mind, only accentuates the acuteness of the question, What are we to do to preserve what we want to preserve in the race? And here he does not shrink from proposing, besides subsidizing healthy parents, to allow the excess women children, releasing men for them by making divorce possible "by consent." Possibly enough — the point suggests itself though one cannot dogmatize on it—Mr. Russell would have taken a longer breath before administering this shock to his public, had it not been for a further consideration—the immense increase of domestic happiness which he thinks would ensue were these measures adopted. About this he has no doubt. Under modern conditions, where temperaments are so various, where individuality is so pronounced—here as ever we must note Mr. Russell's respect for the given individual—and where marriage tends to be more and more based on the equality of the two sexes, the traditional

idea of a lifelong union has become a source of endless wretchedness. In fact "our present marriage law is an inheritance from a simpler age, and is supported in the main by unreasoning fears and by contempt for all that is delicate and difficult in the life of the mind. Owing to the law, large numbers of men and women are condemned, so far as their ostensible relations are concerned, to the society of an utterly uncongenial companion, with all the embittering consciousness that escape is impossible." All this would be alleviated if divorce were made quite easy, and if the law allowed "as much freedom as is compatible with the knowledge of paternity." *

III

The reader will not fail to observe how clearly all the dislocation of the social order here suggested springs from the effort to take the given individual as he is given, and preserve him as far as possible inviolate. The accentuated idiosyncrasies of the modern individual are accepted as one of the inevitabilities, and before that fact other things are simply to make way. We shall not attempt to labour this point further. A cumulative suspicion wins upon the mind, as one accompanies the author through these discussions. There is

What seems to be forgotten in these criticisms: that there is a problem of making the soul, prior to the problem of liberating it.

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, pp. 168–196.

gradually aroused a sense of something infinitely precious, without which all reforms are but makeshifts, of whose nature Mr. Russell's overmastering desire to allow the soul to express its instinctive nature, to shake off its fetters and go out and spend itself, makes one doubt whether he has any real understanding. There is what one can only call an integrity of the individual's social spirit, the conditions of whose maintenance are hardly * recognized in all these suggestions, and which yet is the indispensable foundation of any enjoyment whatever of any human good.

In all his plea for liberation, Mr. Russell assumes that the thing is there to be liberated. There is only the breaking of bonds to be done. What he does not reckon with is the possibility that the bonds may be the man's own very sinews; and that by the time he has broken them all there may be no man. The fact comes out very clearly, for instance, in what one must call his simple failure, in the present discussion, to read the true incidence of those often irksome bonds which safeguard family life. It is simply untrue—it is only by stopping short at first views that he could think it true—that when a woman, for example, finds her choice of a life-partner to have been wrong, the consciousness that escape is impossible " is an " embittering " consciousness. It is the reverse. Such a discovery is tragic,

* But see *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, pp. 238 ff.

certainly, but surely what really embitters is not the sense that the transaction is final, but precisely the opposite, the failure of that sense, the inability to get away from the idea that it is not final, and all the soul-destroying consequences which come with that, the weak dreaming, the habitual looking over the wall into the next person's vineyard, the miserable, furtive, half-hearted imaginings of escape that will never allow the bracing sense of finality to come—consequences the frequency of which in cultivated society is, perhaps to an extent larger than is dreamt, the result of familiarity with all the incidents and machinery of literal and actual escapes.

IV

Mr. Russell's suggested provision for the making of the soul, impracticable on his principles.

The note of all Mr. Russell's suggestions for social reform is that the soul of man should be given more opportunity to spend what is in it. Their real effect is to arouse an irresistible sense of the importance for man of precisely the opposite thing, of an integrated being, a thing which can be lost, but can hardly be recovered, and without which every reform is only a new opportunity for the soul to squander and spill itself.

But although Mr. Russell has not provided for this fact, though he is not sufficiently effectively conscious of it to do so, no one can

close his book and say he is not conscious of it at all. Just when one's sense of it has grown strongest, just when the author has propounded a scheme which specially clearly is going to unstring the very fibres of character, and has boldly claimed for it that it will alleviate the conjugal unhappiness alleged to be very widespread among civilized people, he raises a doubt. Having reminded us that in modern conditions a woman and a man practically cannot be helpmeets, that the one's wish for liberty conflicts fatally with the other's wish for mastery, and that "the clash of these opposing moods makes all real mingling of personalities impossible"; having added that "no cheap and easy solution of this problem is possible," that it "is the outcome of the increasing sense of individuality which springs from mental progress," and that it is a "trouble which affects most the most civilized men and women," the author goes on to make a suggestion. "I doubt," he says, "if there is any radical cure except in some form of religion. . . . As religion dominated the old [mediæval] form of marriage, so religion must dominate the new." "But," he adds—and there is a pathos in it—"it must be a new religion, based upon liberty, justice, and love, not upon authority and law and Hell-fire." * Surely the long low note of pessimism is irresistible here. "I can call spirits from the vasty deep," said Owen

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 191.

Glendower. "Aye, aye," answers Hotspur quickly, "and so can I, and so can any man. But will they come when you do call them?"

Mr. Russell touches here with accuracy upon the very essential which he had hitherto missed. But it is only a touch, and too late. The essential is something for which he has not provided, and for which, so far as we can see, he cannot in all his philosophy provide. He sees the need for self-possession, and he shows in this passage that he sees clearly enough where it comes from. He is conscious that man must somewhere or somehow meet the ultimate and be braced into self-possession by its presence. In no other way, he says, will the modern mind overcome some at least of the difficulties which beset it. In no other way will it be cured of those endless foibles and whims and pettinesses whose growth civilization has encouraged. If these difficulties are to be overcome, the mind must somehow or other be sublimated, and so drawn off in high preoccupation, clear of all entanglement with these trifles. And he indicates the characteristic of anything which will afford the modern mind such preoccupation with an accuracy more striking than we have yet made clear. For we have not yet quoted the full passage. His words are "some form of religion *so firmly and sincerely believed as to dominate even the life of instinct.*" *

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction.* Italics mine.

The being who is to evoke this sublimated mood, is to be not only a Deity whose existence our intellects prove to us, but one whom those old, dark instincts in us know, and before whom they fall down in worship. Does such a being appear anywhere in realistic philosophy? It is a question which after these studies there is hardly much need to pursue. But at least Mr. Russell's conception of what an adequate religion would do for a man is, in all essentials, admirable. Religion, he explains in his discussion of that "institution," should unite instinct, mind, and spirit. It should, that is to say, provide scope for (1) the impulse to live, (2) the critical faculty or thought, and (3) for all that higher life of impersonal feeling, that life of the spirit, which is expressed in art and poetry. All are essential to a full life; and it is imperative that a reconciliation of them should be achieved "if men are to remain whole." * Whether Mr. Russell believes such a reconciliation to be possible would be rather hard to say. He clearly feels himself to have effected something like it in his own case. But this is not the point. To those who know his writings it will be extremely hard to see how, even if this be his own case, his case could ever become typical. In his general philosophy, the demands we have seen him make in the way of "proof" for whatever is to be reckoned as having furnished satisfactory

* *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 209.

evidence for itself, reach the very limit of formalism and stringency. He begins as a mathematician to whom mathematical proofs themselves are not sufficiently evident. With this as standard, the truths of real value which can be believed in this world would seem inevitably to reduce themselves to the very few which are susceptible of formal mathematical demonstration. If, with his clear sense of the social necessity of religion, Mr. Russell is able himself cheerfully to discard from his own creed whatever is not able to satisfy his expressed criteria of certainty, it can only be because he is able (through whatever peculiar cast of temperament) to set some quite fanatical value upon the remnant. And indeed some such explanation seems to be actually available. The impression left by the perusal of some of his essays on the higher human subjects—we have in mind particularly his essay on "The Free Man's Worship" *—is that the writer has the power, in a remarkably high degree, to fasten with a genuinely religious zeal upon whatever truth there is.

V

And yet it seems to us that indications of a sounder way out of the problem presented by the social necessity of religion may be found

To attain his ends recourse must be had to other principles than he has advocated.

* In *Philosophical Essays* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1910).

from some of Russell's own expressions of principle. And here it is worth remembering that if our contentions in this essay have been sound, Mr. Russell may be expected at times to speak for a much wider movement than his own. In a certain connexion we saw him insist that we should " reverence " the mind of man. Now, one way to do this is to reverence its works—that is to say, its history. He insists similarly that we should find a Deity whose reality our very instincts should feel. One way to do this is to find in the established institutions of the history of civilized humanity traces of the presence of a Deity. Not that we should worship these and never change them, and so never progress. But our changing of them must also be a deeper entering into them. The joy of individual liberation from them should be tempered with a renewed joy in their protecting safety. The power to go forward into something new should be but the other side of a power to reach back with freshness into the good of what is old. Only so can our progress be progress. For here we are in the realm of the spirit, where a victory won is a victory lost whenever we have lost the sense of having won it. If we have lost the power to appreciate what our institutions have won for us, then we may stumble forward from one new excitement to another; but spite of whatever crying out about vigour and energy, Bergsonian " violence " of spiritual effort, syn-

dicalistic fight and risk and victory—we shall never make progress or win victory more. For progress is a state. It is no mere mechanical sequence of action and action and again action; nor is it any mere mechanical round of feeling new impulses and inventing new labours wherein to satisfy them, over and over again. It is a state, and is either there or not there. It is a state, if we may venture to define it further, of perpetual attaining. It is a man's hold of the "joy for ever," his hold of something eternally alive yet changeless, like the poet's joy in the beauty traced on the Grecian urn, "For ever shalt thou love and she be fair." The power to live in this presence is liberation of the spirit. And this, in the present state of the world, is to be secured otherwise than by simply turning away from those activities by which the social order has been built up and is preserved, otherwise than by merely breaking bonds. What we need, more than further emancipation, is to follow out better the beaten track of thought, and thereby mayhap find our loose ends of both thought and character at length bound up in a really effective and convincing way. Upon the practical side this would mean a policy of what has been called the intensive realization of life, a cultivation of the power to realize what we have already gained, rather than of the endless desire to be still gaining more.

VI

Conclusion.

But already we are being drawn beyond the limits which in this little treatise we had set ourselves. Our primary purpose was to show where certain phases of recent philosophy and recent social movements converge, not what action their convergence calls for. We have taken two typical products of recent philosophical thinking, not in any way influenced by one another, so different, in fact, that they appear to agree in nothing except in the greatness of their influence upon contemporary thought. We have tried to show that a genuine relationship exists between them which explains their common affinity with a third; which third is again a manifestation of the modern mind although in another sphere—the political. We believe that any one who takes the trouble, and succeeds in the attempt, to view all three together will find that they meet about a point. And by the time he has seen and appreciated their mutual involution, he will perhaps have envisaged a large and not unimportant trend in modern life and thought.

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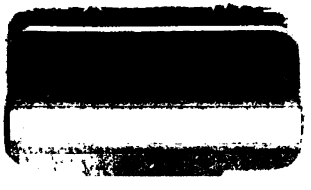
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